

As we continue to follow the historical track of the Bible, we find God's history moving on. The Jacob-Israel family entered Egypt as a family of seventy. God was preparing the Jacob-Israel family to become the nation of Israel. Now we follow the nation Israel through the struggles of the forty-year wilderness wandering. As we continue the dot connecting, we will follow Israel from the giving of the Law and the Ten Commandments right up to just before they enter the Promised Land.

The Law was a very significant part of Israel's history and faith. However, the New Testament writer Paul tells us that "*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith*" **Galatians 3:24 (NKJV)**. The Law makes us aware of our need for a Savior. The Law does not make anyone right. We continue connecting the dots to the One who is the theme of the Bible, Jesus Christ, God's Messiah.

## **WEEK 40 GOD GIVES MOSES THE TEN COMMANDMENTS--** -----Chris Watson

Boundaries for children are good, and boundaries can also be good for adults. Boundaries keep us safe, keep us out of trouble, and can save us from a ton of heartache. God's boundaries, or commandments, provide protection for us which helps us keep our eyes on God while showing us what sin is.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Exodus 19**

God is holy and we are not. He is righteous and we are wicked. He is perfect and we are imperfect. It is important that we understand this. It's not just that some people are bad and others are good. Isaiah 64 tells us that our righteousness is like filthy rags. Webster defines filthy as foul or of putrid matter. Our sins are as filthy, nasty rags. Think about that for a minute. We, on our own, have nothing to offer God and until we realize this, we will never see our need for Jesus. Since God is holy and we are not, God cannot and will not be associated with us. There is no sin in heaven. Therefore, as sinners, we are doomed unless we know Jesus. Jesus is our only hope. Since God can't be associated with sin, we can't be in His presence without the blood of Jesus.

Moses took this seriously and so did God. He warned the people not to come up the mountain. In fact, verse 23 says the Lord was putting limits around the mountain and setting it apart as holy. God wanted to ensure that the people knew what the limits were.

Aren't you thankful for Jesus? Scripture tells us we can now boldly approach the throne of God through Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of Jesus' blood, there is no forgiveness of sins meaning we can't know God and we won't spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Thank God for Jesus. Thank Him for being righteous and holy while at the same time being a just God.

## Day 2

### Read Exodus 20:1-21

In today's passage, God speaks to Moses and gives him the Ten Commandments. Much has been said about the Ten Commandments over the years, but the truth is they are from God and were given to the Israelites. Scripture tells us that the commandments (the Law) were given so that we might know what sin is and point us to Jesus.

Can you imagine being one of the Israelites and experiencing what they had experienced? Our response might have been the same. Reality is, the people were given commandments and many of them had already broken them! The commandments they were given that hadn't already been broken, they knew they wouldn't be able to keep. This is why we need Jesus.

Look at verse 20. After hearing the commandments, the people sought to follow them and did what they could to not break them. As believers, we might keep or follow God's commandments because we know the consequences of breaking even one will be great. The law was made to draw us to God and for us to seek Him to help us. As we grow in our walk, our focus should shift to pleasing and honoring God and not so much just keeping commandments. As we come to know God more and seek Him, His law is placed in our heart and our focus will be on Him. By seeking to honor and please Him, we are following or obeying His commandments with the focus being on Him rather than the commandments. The more we know Him, the more we follow Him, and the more we do what His heart desires. May we have the heart of Jesus and may His words be written on our hearts!

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Galatians 3:23-24

At a quick glance, it may seem that Galatians is totally contradicting what we read yesterday. Yesterday, we read the Law, the Ten Commandments was given to Moses and the people to follow. Yet today, we read the law could be like a prison. Which one is right? In fact, both are right and they don't contradict each other. In the time of Moses, the people were to follow God's commandments and seek to honor and love Him. Jesus had not yet come so God was setting up standards in how they were to live their lives according to God's commands. When Jesus came, He would shed His blood for you and me so that we would know Him and go to heaven. We are not made right by following the Law, but by trusting in Jesus. This doesn't mean that we simply trust in Him and live our lives like we want. The Scriptures say we died to sin, so how can we live in it any longer?

Martin Luther wrote "There are three ways in which the Law may be abused. First, by the self-righteous hypocrites who fancy that they can be justified by the Law. Secondly, by those who claim that Christian liberty exempts a Christian from the observance of the Law. These,' says Peter, 'use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness,' and bring the name and the Gospel of Christ into ill repute. Thirdly, the Law is abused by those who do not understand that the Law is meant to drive us to Christ. When the Law is properly used its value cannot be too highly appraised. It will take me to Christ every time."<sup>1</sup>

The law is meant to show us our need for Christ. Go back and read over the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20. How many have you broken? The truth is we have broken most, if not all of them, which means we are guilty before God. We have no hope except for Jesus. The bad news is that we have all broken God's laws, but the good news is that Christ died for our sins. When we trust in Jesus, we can know God and have the promise of heaven.

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<sup>1</sup>A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Take some time to thank God for His son Jesus. Acknowledge the shortcomings in your life and seek to follow God and know that as **Romans 8:1 (NIV)** says, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

## Day 4

### Read Exodus 20:22-23

We are all tempted in different ways! Some of us are tempted or enticed in ways others are not and vice versa. The enemy wants to do everything he can to keep us from following God. God knew how the Israelites would be tempted, so much so that He gave them the first two commandments again in today's passage. Read Exodus 20:2-3 again. It is very similar to today's passage, just more concise.

Robert Robinson wrote these words in 1758: "O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be! Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above."

The words to this song express our desire to sin. We know we are often prone to wander and to walk away from God. We know Walking away is wrong and in the end, it will not benefit us. It will only hurt our relationship with God. When we worship anything other than God, be it real idols (as in Moses' time) fame, money, relationships, our job, etc., then, we are walking away from God. Selfishness and pride are at the bottom of every sin, trying to satisfy ourselves and get what we want, when, truly, the only thing that can satisfy is God Himself.

What areas of sin and weaknesses seek to pull you away from the Lord? Lay those before the Lord today and seek Him. We don't overcome our sin by seeking not to do it, but rather by keeping our eyes on God and seeking Him. Seek Him today!

## Day 5

### Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Luke 22:19-20

We read about covenants all throughout the Old Testament. The first time we see a covenant is in Genesis 9 when God makes the promise never to flood the earth again. Later, we see the covenant God made to Abram in Genesis 15:18-21. We also see in Genesis God made a covenant with Abram that He would give his descendants the land of Canaan and Abram would be the father of many nations.

Today, we read about the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. It's important that we know and understand the Old Covenant, which we read about a few weeks back, so that we can grasp the New Covenant. The New Covenant is speaking of Jesus! In this passage, Jesus is telling His disciples that His blood will be poured out for them.

By the grace of God, we all can be part of the New Covenant by placing our faith in Jesus. Placing our faith in Jesus is the only way for our sins to be taken away and it gives us the hope of heaven, which is great! This also also means we have the hope of an eternal relationship with God Himself, we get to live with God forever, and we will get to see those that went before us and those that will go after us. Oftentimes, we think of salvation in regards to what we are saved from. We are saved from hell, the enemy, death, and destruction, but salvation is also what we have been saved to! We have been saved to a relationship with the creator of the universe. This life is here today and gone tomorrow, but God has given us this life to "practice" worshiping Him as we will be doing in Heaven. We will know Him and it will be very much like it was before Adam and Eve sinned. We will walk with God and there will be no pain, sin, death, or destruction. For God will have won, once and for all, and if we are on God's team, we will have won too. Do you know God through His Son Jesus? If not, ask Him to take your sins away and seek to follow Him. If you do, thank Him for Jesus and continue practicing His presence.





## **WEEK 41 THE TABERNACLE-----Dennis Watson**

The Israelites were instructed to build a tabernacle. The tabernacle was a tent that represented the dwelling of God among the Israelites. It is a “connecting the dots” thing when you think about the words of John. In **John 1:14 (NKJV)** John writes, “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*” The word here for dwelt is the word for tabernacle. However, as much as the tabernacle reminded the people of His presence, there was a veil that separated the special room in the tabernacle, called the Holy of Holies. It was where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. Once a year, the High Priest, would enter with a blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. God wanted all of the people to know, not just Israel, but all of the surrounding nations that Israel’s God was not a false god and that He lived among His people.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Exodus 25:1-9**

God gave Moses a rather lengthy list of materials to be used for building the tabernacle. Remember, God wanted the Israelites to know that He was with them. He often made His presence known to them through a cloud, fire, and smoke. There were no other gods. People in the places around them had false gods, represented by the idols that were made by men. God told the people that there was not to be any representative image of Him that they would worship.

The instruction to Moses was to speak to the Israelites and tell them to bring these items as offerings for building the tabernacle. Where would they get things like gold, silver, and bronze? After all, they had been slaves in Egypt. Remember when they were getting ready to leave Egypt? God told them to ask for gold, silver, and other valuable items from the Egyptians. God made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the Israelites and the Egyptians gave them what they asked for. God prepares us in advance for what we will need and even what He will ask of us!

Not only did God give a list of the materials for the people to bring to build the tabernacle, He also showed Moses the pattern for the building of the tabernacle. Was there a literal tabernacle in heaven? Apparently there was. You see the same wording in Hebrews 8:5 and in Hebrews 9:23-24. The people were obviously excited about the Tabernacle because in Exodus 36:6-7, Moses had to tell the people to stop bringing offerings because they had more than enough— "*too much!*"

Thank God for the blessings of His presence among us!

## Day 2

### Read Exodus 26

The tabernacle was a very large tent-like structure which could easily be taken down and moved. It would be the place where Moses would meet with God to receive instructions for the people. It was the place of sacrifice and prayer. It was also central to the national life of the Israelites. The tabernacle reminded the people of God's presence with them.

The tabernacle was 45 feet long and 15 feet wide and high. It had four coverings. The first covering that could be seen from the inside was linen with cherubim embroidered in gold, blue, and purple thread. Next was a layer of material made of black goat's hair, then a layer of ram's hide dyed red and, on top, badger skin. Inside there were two rooms, the Holy Place and then a 10 by 10 room called the Holy of Holies. Inside the Holy of Holies was a chest called the Ark of the Covenant. The chest was 27 inches by 45 inches and was 27 inches high. The stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that had budded were placed inside the Ark. The top of the Ark was something called the Mercy Seat. It was here that the High Priest would sprinkle blood from a sacrifice each year to atone or cover the sins of the people. This was the place from which God would speak with Moses to give instructions to the people.

When Jesus was crucified, the veil in the temple separating the Holy of Holies was torn apart from top to bottom. The death of Jesus on the cross bought for all people access into the presence of God. His blood became the covering for our sin. No longer was it necessary for a man, the High Priest, to go into the Holy of Holies to speak to God and make atonement for sin. Jesus' crucifixion bought our access. We can now freely enter because He is our sacrifice, our High Priest, and God's continuing presence!

Connect the dots, they all points to Jesus!

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Exodus 27:1-8 and Hebrews 10:4-10

Yesterday, we looked at the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies— the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat. Just outside the Holy of Holies, beside the veil, was the altar of incense. Incense in the Bible usually symbolizes prayer. There was also in the Holy Place a table called the table of showbread. Each week twelve loaves of bread were placed on the table. For us, the bread reminds us that Jesus is the bread of life. He provides what we need. The last piece of furniture was the golden lampstand. This was a lampstand with seven lamps. No natural light could enter the tabernacle, so the lampstand provided light and reminds us that Jesus is the light and He has sent us to carry the light to the world.

In the courtyard surrounding the tabernacle was the altar of burnt offerings. On this altar, thousands of lambs were sacrificed year after year to provide forgiveness for sin. It was an altar that no one could touch. No matter how many animals were sacrificed here, they were not sufficient to remove sin. They were a constant reminder of sin.

However, as we connect the dots, we read in the New Testament that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for sin. It was not the blood of lambs, bulls, or goats that would accomplish forgiveness. In Hebrews 10, we read that the blood of Jesus did what the blood of animals could never do. Jesus died “once for all” that our sins may be “once for all” completely dealt with. When we come into the presence of God, we do not have to bring an animal to sacrifice. No, Jesus became our sacrificial lamb. We freely approach God totally forgiven with our sins covered by His death and we have victory over sin, death, and the grave by His resurrection.

Thank God for Jesus being our sacrifice for sin!

## Day 4

### Read Exodus 28:1-30

All of the furnishings in and around the tabernacle had significant meaning, but the clothing and items the priests wore also had significance. In connecting the dots, we need to be reminded that we are priests. That is right! As believers, we are a kingdom of priests. There is a New Testament doctrine called the priesthood of every believer. This means that as believers, we are all full-time servants of God. We do not need anyone other than Jesus to stand before God on our behalf. However, it goes further. The priests had special clothing and items to wear when they served. On each shoulder of the ephod, a vest-like garment, was attached an onyx stone. On each onyx stone was engraved six names of the tribes of Israel for a total of twelve. There was also a breastplate to be worn which had twelve jewels, each having the name of one of the twelve tribes engraved on it. The names of the twelve tribes would remind the priest that the tribes were important to God and should be important to him, also.

I believe the location of the names worn was also important. The names on the shoulder would remind the priest that he carried the needs and concerns of the people on his shoulders and was to bring those people and their needs to God in prayer. The names on the breastplate worn over the heart would be a reminder to keep the people in his heart.

There are some applications for priests today—all believers. First we are to be interceding for others. One part of a priest's responsibility was to stand before God on behalf of others. We should bear people on our shoulders before God. As Jesus, our Great High Priest, is ever interceding (Hebrews 7:25), we too should be interceding, praying for others. The breastplate with the names over his heart reminded him that he also stood before people on behalf of God. The hope was to point people to God and His Word. As priests, we have both of these opportunities; we stand before God on behalf of others and we stand before others on behalf of God as His representatives. Ask God for the grace to be an effective priest.

## Day 5

### Read Psalm 72:4-8

We have already looked at a portion of this Psalm. It is a Psalm that speaks of Jesus in advance. The first part talks about Jesus being King of righteousness. The scripture for today speaks of Jesus being King of peace. A king rules and reigns which results in certain experiences. In the future, eternal earthly reign of Jesus as King, there will be peace—total, complete, eternal peace. It will be a peace that will last forever (*“Until the moon is no more”*) and will be everywhere (*“from sea to sea”*). I am looking forward to that!

In the meantime, and often it really is mean-time, Jesus rules and reigns in the hearts and minds of His people. Of course, we must wait for the complete peace which will come when His eternal Kingdom is established, but for now, we have the peace which He brings.

Look at the words of Jesus:

*"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* **John 14:27 (NKJV)**

Just a few days ago, I was really having a tough time dealing with some things and finding myself desperate for peace. I searched the Bible for some help and I wrote many passages down in my journal. Here is one of those passages:

*"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."* **Colossians 3:15 (NKJV)**

Make it a regular experience to be reminded that Jesus is even now our King of peace. Wait, abide and continue in His presence and His peace will guard you.



## WEEK 42 THE GOLDEN CALF-----Chris Watson

Just nine chapters ago, we saw the Lord give Moses and the Israelites the Ten Commandments and then we saw the first two reiterated. This week, we will see that “knowing” and “doing” are two separate things. The Israelites clearly understood the Lord’s commands, but they chose to follow what they wanted to do.

### Day 1

#### Read Exodus 29:1-21, 35-37

We have already seen that God is a God of details and we see this again in these verses. He gave specific instructions for Aaron and his sons and they followed them carefully.

Notice that there was a sin offering and in **verse 36** we see, *“Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement.”* This was a constant reminder of their sin and God’s desire for holiness, but they were not holy. The blood of the animals was meant to cover their sins so they could serve in God’s presence. The only person who can take our sins away is Jesus. When Jesus died, was buried, and rose again as payment for our sins, He covered all of our sins, every one of them. That’s why we no longer make sacrifices as followers of Christ. Jesus’ blood was more than enough. We need no sacrifice other than Jesus himself. No matter what we have done, Jesus’ blood can cover it. When we trust Jesus and what He has done for us, we are saved and forgiven. If God has forgiven us, we need to forgive ourselves. C.S. Lewis says, “If God forgives us we must forgive ourselves otherwise it’s like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Remember the thief on the cross dying next to Jesus? Apparently, he had done something really bad since he was being crucified (Luke 23:41). He realized that Jesus was the Son of God and that his only hope was Jesus. He asked Jesus to remember him when He came into the Kingdom. Jesus told him, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”* **Luke 23:43 (NIV)**

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<sup>2</sup>Long Story Short, Marty Machowski, pg. 183



No matter what we have done, Jesus' blood is enough and it will always be enough. Rest today in His mercy and grace thanking Him that He is the ultimate sacrifice.

## Day 2

### Read Exodus 32:1-8

How long was Moses up on the mountain? Maybe he was dead. Maybe he forgot. Maybe Moses was just taking his time. Whatever the reason, the people saw that Moses was taking too long to come down after the commandments had been passed to him. They even said they were not sure what had happened to him. So what did they do? They made idols (gods).

They didn't just make gods and worship them, they even said in verse 4 that these gods brought them up out of Egypt! What? The God who had allowed them to escape Egypt, parted the Red Sea, given them manna, and provided for them in every way was now being substituted with man-made gods. They had totally forgotten the one true God; they had forgotten or really ignored His commandments and now they were doing their own thing! This is so hard to believe. How dare they!

How could they do something like this? Do WE do something like this? Yes, us! It's so easy to read this account and question the Israelites, when, unfortunately, we have so many similarities. Do we know God's commands? Do we know God? Do we know what God asks of us? Do we always follow? Unfortunately, we don't. We, like the Israelites, often go our own way. When God is too "slow," when we want our way, or when we just don't want to listen, we go our own way and make other things or people our god(s).

Today, let us realize that we can be very fickle as believers, but, thankfully, God isn't. He is faithful; we can trust Him and follow Him. Let us see that the One who has brought us to where we are, has brought us out of sin and into the light. Let us acknowledge that He is the only God and He is all that we need. We need no other.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Exodus 32:9-14

God loved the people of Israel and so did Moses. However, once God saw them worshipping other gods and thanking those other gods for bringing them out of Egypt, that was enough. Moses was the mediator between God and the Israelites. Moses sought God and asked Him why He brought them out of Egypt just to destroy them. Verse 14 tells us that God relented, meaning He decided not to destroy them.

Moses was the mediator, the go-between if you will, between God and the Israelites. We need a mediator as well! Why? God is holy and righteous without sin and we are sinful and unholy. Scripture tells us that because of this, we will die, both physically and spiritually. Every man will die physically, but not all have to die spiritually. God sent His Son Jesus to become our mediator, living the righteous life that we could not, so that when we trust in Him we have His righteousness. This is called imputation. Scripture tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)** *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* Jesus is the only mediator between us and God. We can't fix our sin problem; neither can our spouses, parents, best friends, or anyone else.

God would have been perfectly just not to send Jesus as our mediator. However, because of His great love and His desire to be in a right relationship with us, He did. Scripture tells us that it is God's desire for none to perish, but for all to come to repentance and faith in Jesus! Have you come to repentance? Do you know Him? Is Jesus your Savior? I pray that He is. Spend some time thanking Him for dying for your sins and for placing His righteousness on you.

## Day 4

### Read Exodus 32:15-35

Waiting on God can sometimes be difficult. We know the best thing to do is to wait and let the Lord reveal Himself to us. Sometimes, though, we get impatient and take things into our own hands. The Israelites were, in essence, waiting for Moses' direction, but he took too long and they were not sure what happened to him so they took things into their own hands.

Did you catch verse 20 of this passage? Go back and read it. Can you imagine that? I believe Moses was angry and he was seeking to get the people to understand that if this is what they really wanted, they could have it. He made them drink it. Most likely, the people knew, their disobedience was not worth it. This case is true with all of God's people. When we go our own way and seek to do our own thing, no matter what we may gain, good or bad, it is not God's plan and it always leads in the way of destruction. Yet it doesn't always seem this way. In fact, if we are disobeying God, we don't gain anything but disobedience and following the way of the enemy is never good.

Can you imagine what Moses must have thought and felt when coming off the mountain? He had just had an encounter with God and was given the Ten Commandments and now he had to deal with this! Not only was it the people, but his right hand man, Aaron, his brother, was the one contributing to following the ways of the enemy. To make matters worse, Aaron says in verse 24 that he just threw gold in the fire and out came a calf. Really?

When we seek to take matters into our own hands, instead of placing them in God's hands, it's never good. It may seem good from what we see, or others may see it as good, but God sees and calls it disobedience. May we always seek God, wait on Him, and not become impatient. Today seek, pray, and ask the Lord to help you trust and wait on Him rather than taking matters into your own hands!

## Day 5

### Read Isaiah 53:12

Isaiah is a book rich in prophecy and this verse, in particular, is very clear about the prophecy of Jesus. This verse says so much:

1) *He poured His life unto death* - meaning He died for the sins of the world and it's His desire that every person come to repentance. The word in the NIV is "poured" which implies He willingly gave it and He gave it all. He didn't have to. After all, He is God. He died for us, so we wouldn't have to die and so we could know Him, not just know about Him.

2) *He was numbered with the transgressors* - Jesus was literally considered by many to be a sinner because He spoke prophecy and spoke of who He was, God's Son. Many didn't believe Him and said He was a liar and a blasphemer. As we find in Scripture, He took great ridicule, but remained silent for you and for me.

3) *He bore the sin of many* - When Jesus died, He literally died for the sins of all. Can you imagine the weight of the sins of the world? He died for murder, lies, hate, lust, bitterness, jealousy, etc. This might help us get a better picture of why Jesus' death was so grueling. It wasn't just physical, it was so much more.

4) *He made intercession for the transgressors* (and still does) - When Jesus died for our sins, He was interceding between God and sinners. Scripture tells us that even now He is at the right hand of God interceding for you and me. We have an advocate, Jesus Christ! He is standing in our place, much like Moses was seeking to stand in the place of the people. Jesus stood in our place!

Thank the Lord for Jesus. Take some time today to thank Jesus for who He is and what He has done!



## **WEEK 43 GOD HAS MERCY ON ISRAEL-----Dennis Watson**

Since the people left Egypt, God had been traveling with them. They knew He was there because He gave them a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. With the tabernacle, they had another reminder of His presence. On several occasions, God called the people “stiff-necked.” This meant that they were stubborn and would not be obedient to Him. Last week, we looked at the biblical historical account of the golden calf. Idolatry is a very ugly and devastating sin because it is the sin of trying to make a substitute for God. This week we read Moses interceded as a mediator of the people before God and God gave them a fresh new beginning. As they continued their journey, God continued to travel with them.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Exodus 33:1-11**

There are many sad words in the Bible and this passage is really sad. God told Moses that the people were to continue on their journey to the Promised Land, but He would not go with them. He would send His angel ahead of them. He would not go with them because He might rise up because of their stubbornness and destroy them. He would send His angel ahead to drive out the people from the land. When the people heard this, they were upset. This time they took off their jewelry, not to build an idol but, as a sign of sorrow and repentance.

Moses moved the special tent he used to meet with God away from the people so he could cry out to God on their behalf. When Moses would meet with the Lord, the people would stand far off and watch. They knew God was meeting with him because the cloud that traveled with them would hover at the tent door. The people were obviously anticipating hearing from God and hoping that He would turn from removing His presence from them.

The scripture says God met with Moses "*Face to face.*" However, based on the context that follows, this would probably mean the Angel of the Lord or a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus met with Moses. Jesus said, "*He who has seen me has seen the Father*" **John 14:9 (NKJV)**. We do not have to worry about those sad words. Jesus promised that He would be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19). He gave us His Holy Spirit as a deposit (Ephesians 1:14). We are blessed to have the security that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37-39).

Thank God for His continuous presence. He is always with you. Acknowledge and enjoy His presence.



## Day 2

### Read Exodus 33:12-23

Moses stood in the gap for the people. He was their mediator. He met with God on their behalf and he stood before the people and spoke for God on His behalf. Moses interceded for the people after the golden calf debacle. God told the people that they could continue on their journey, but He was withdrawing His presence from them. Moses said that God's presence with them showed God was the real and true God and He was their God. Moses cried out to God saying that they would not go without Him and he pleaded for God's grace, reminding Him the people were His people. As a result of Moses' intercession, God told Moses He would go with them on their journey.

Many of us, including myself, have longed to see God. This is what Moses asked of God. He asked to see God's face. God told Moses he could not see the face of God and live. God told him He would show him His glory so He put Moses in a safe place in a rock and hid him there with His hand. As God passed by before Moses, God covered Moses with His hand and allowed Moses to "*See My back.*" This is a very gracious and tender picture where God is dealing with Moses as a loving father deals with his child.

Neither Moses, nor any other person, for that matter, can see the face of God and live. However, we can see the glory of God. Remember Jesus said that to see Him is to see the Father! God reveals Himself so we can see His glory. The glory of God is His shining. To see God's shining is to see His impact. Moses was allowed to see God's back. I believe Moses was able to see where God had been! To know that God creates, saves, and transforms is to know and then see, or recognize, His handiwork. Seeing my children and grandchildren when they were born, was seeing the glory of God. Seeing God work in a person's life through salvation, the new birth, is to see God's glory.

There is coming a day when we will see the fullness of God revealed in the resurrected and glorified Jesus. Open your eyes and look and see where God has been. His glory is all around.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Hebrews 12:18-24

Hebrews tells us the New Covenant is superior in every way to the Old. It is not that the first failed, but the first was the prelude or the preface to the New. The preface of a book introduces and gives a hint of what is to come in the pages that follow. The Old Testament and the Old Covenant were a preface for what was coming in the New. Mount Sinai represents the Old Covenant and Mount Zion represents the New Covenant. Moses was the mediator between Israel and God. His mediation was temporary and brought temporary pardon for guilt. However, in today's passage, there is a greater, in fact, the greatest mediator, Jesus.

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. Hebrews 8:6 (NIV)

Through Jesus, we can draw near with confidence. When Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to receive the law, the people were prohibited from even coming near the mountain. The picture of Mt. Zion is a picture of the New Jerusalem and the New Heaven and Earth. We do not fear, but anticipate God's blessings and salvation because of Jesus. Verse 24 says that Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant. Moses was the mediator who stood for the people and sought God's forgiveness for their stubbornness. Jesus is the Mediator between us and God to save, or deliver us, and reunite us to God.

Abel and Jesus were both wrongfully killed. Abel's blood cried out for justice. Jesus' blood cried out for mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

Give thanks that through Jesus, our Mediator and our Savior, we can confidently live and always abide in God's presence without fear.

## Day 4

### Read Exodus 34

God is the God of second chances (and third, fourth, fifth and so on). Moses went back up on Mt. Sinai to meet with God again, and once again, God gave him the law and two new stone tablets. God told Moses that He is the Lord God and He is all about goodness, forgiveness, and mercy, but at the same time the God of justice. Moses, once again, asked God to pardon the people for their stubbornness.

I am thankful that God is a God of mercy and grace and He seeks to forgive and give new beginnings. While up on the mountain, in addition to giving the law again, God reminded them not to have false gods or idols and to keep the Sabbath. God also reminded Moses that the firstborn belonged to Him, but could be redeemed with a lamb. The lamb was sacrificed for the firstborn as a substitute. This was looking ahead to Jesus, God's firstborn and only begotten Son, who was sacrificed for us. Moses came down off the mountain with two new stone tablets with the Ten Commandments engraved on them. This was for the people, God's forgiveness and His offer of a new beginning.

God was, is, and always will be the God of new beginnings. He is the God of justice, but also forgiveness. He offers to all who will repent and come to Him on His terms, through His Mediator, Jesus, a new beginning. We are graciously reminded that all who are in Christ are new creatures. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

*Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." Revelation 21:5 (NKJV)*

Thank God for new beginnings and that His mercies are new every morning.

## Day 5

### Read Psalm 16:8-10 and Acts 2:25-31

Can you imagine reading this Psalm without the benefit of the New Testament? Who would live and die, but not stay dead? I have said it several times already; we have a wonderful perspective from which to read and study the Bible. The Psalmist speaks of one who would live a glorious life and die, but not stay dead. In Acts 2, Peter is preaching and says that this Psalm was speaking about Jesus. In these verses, we see the life of Christ (Psalm 16:8). We also see the death of Christ (Psalm 16:9). In verse 10, we have the resurrection and in verse 11, the ascension to the right hand of God. Perhaps without the preaching of Peter and the words of Paul in Acts 13:34-39, we might not have known of whom this Psalm was speaking of. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself!

It is an incredible thing to read the Old Testament and the New and connect the dots. The Old Testament predicts and anticipates Jesus. The New Testament reveals what the Old had concealed.

As I continue to travel this journey through the Old Testament, my faith is being bolstered. What is happening with you? Be reminded that Romans 10:17 says that faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Tell someone today what has been happening to your faith. I have been in church all my life (67 years), but since we have been on this journey, my faith has grown incredibly!

Join me in thanking God for growing our faith!



## **WEEK 44 THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL COMPLAIN--Chris Watson**

It's been said that the people who often complain the most are Christians! It seems to have been similar in the Old Testament. Those that were following the Lord often had things to complain to the Lord about. From not wanting the food they had to eat to wishing they could be back in Egypt, even thinking Moses had brought them out of Egypt to die, they were always complaining! We will see this week that the Lord is not in favor of complaining.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Numbers 10:11-13 and 10:33-11:3**

We pick up the account of the Israelites today in Numbers. When the cloud lifted in Numbers 10:11-12, it meant that the Israelites had to take down their tents and pack up everything as they traveled with everything they had. When the cloud lifted, they would travel and when it came to rest, they would stop as they were headed towards Canaan, the land that the Lord had promised them. (You can read more about this in Exodus 9:15-23.) God had brought the Israelites through many difficulties, including deliverance from bondage and the parting of the Red Sea. Now God was leading them in their next step and it says in verse 33 that the ark of the Lord went before them, meaning the Lord was preparing the way and He was going before them.

In the next verses, we find the Israelites complaining about their hardships. We are not sure what the hardships were, but we can assume they were just upset from having to move, although they were moving under the Lord's leadership and He was with them. Maybe they were tired of traveling for three days and were worn out. Whatever the reason, they were complaining. God had brought them this far but all they did was complain.

This hits a little too close to home for most of us! Unfortunately, followers of Christ are often the ones who complain the most. Why is that?

We have been given a relationship with God through Jesus Christ; we have hope in this life and hope in our next life with Jesus. We have been promised that there will be difficult times, so it shouldn't be a surprise to us, but we have also been promised God will be right with us like He was with the Israelites, and yet, we complain. As David Ring used to say, we "bellyache."

What did God do when they started to complain? He sent them a warning sign; He sent fire that burned some of the outskirts of the camp. It was as if God was saying, "I hear you, but you have Me, you have all you need, you have nothing to complain about." Today, might we realize that while we can share with God our difficult times and how we need Him, we have so much to be grateful for. Most importantly, we can know Him. While everything else may fall apart, He never will. May we learn to say, "It is well with my soul," because we know God. He is the maker of the heavens and the earth, the stars and the moon, the water and the dry land. He is God and He is all powerful! Seek Him today.

## Day 2

### Read Numbers 11:4-17

Verse 4 speaks of "the rabble." What is "the rabble?" Most likely it was Egyptians who had left Egypt and possibly even intermarried with some of the Israelites. They were not true, authentic Israelites. These people began wanting food other than what they had and as they complained, other Israelites joined in with them. They were lusting for food. John Butler says, "Lust was the cause of this particular complaining by the Israelites. Lusting does not bring contentment; it only fosters discontent. We will never be content when we allow our lives to be governed by our fleshly lusts."<sup>3</sup> What the Lord had given them was more than sufficient for what they needed. It was enough! However, when we seek to go after things on our own, rather than receiving what God has provided, we are seeking to gain contentment where it can't be found. We will only find satisfaction in a relationship with God!

Not only did they want meat, but they began reminiscing about what they had in Egypt. They were, in essence, wishing they were back in Egypt with the food they had there. They had forgotten they were in bondage at that time and were seeking to be delivered from that bondage. Their desire for "temporary" satisfaction was outweighing true satisfaction in God.

The Israelites had again forgotten what the Lord had done and how far He had brought them. As believers, we sometimes do this. Take a minute to see where the Lord has brought you. Can you see how He has worked in your life? May we never forget where the Lord has brought us. If He has saved us, this is a miracle in itself. Then He works in our lives and grows us into what He wants us to be. May we not desire or lust for things we know are not of God. May God be our portion, everything we need, and may we find that only He can fill us. Nothing that we can want or gain on our own will do that. Thank Jesus that He gives us what we need and we can depend on Him.

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<sup>3</sup>Bible Biography Series— Moses: The Emancipator of Israel



## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **Read Numbers 11:24-29 and Acts 2:14-18**

Moses had inquired of the Lord for some help in leading this group of obstinate people and the Lord gave it to him. He provided seventy elders to help carry the load and they began to prophesy! Joshua wanted to stop them, but Moses told him that he wished all were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on all of them.

We see this carried out in Acts 2 of our reading today. Acts is the beginning of the New Testament church and we see the Spirit of the Lord (Holy Spirit) speaking to men and women and using them as instruments to teach the truth. One of those we see is Peter.

The Spirit of the Lord is not something that is conjured up or a formula, if you will. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ and you have put your hope in Him, you have the Spirit of the Lord in you, the Holy Spirit who guides, directs, and leads you. As believers, it should be our desire that, with each new day, we live more and more in the Spirit. This is not to say we only have some of the Spirit; we have all, but as we seek God and know Him through His Word and prayer, we are directed more by His Spirit. Then it is our desire for others to have the Spirit of the Lord, for them to know God through Jesus Christ.

May our prayer be for the Spirit of the Lord to work in our lives and in the lives of others. Let us realize that He wants to work in the life of everyone and one of His tools to do so might be you or me! Live in the Spirit today and seek to be used by Him.

## Day 4

### Read Numbers 11:31-34

We understand from verse 34 that not all of the people died because not all of them craved other food. So, while some died because of their craving for meat other than what God had provided, those that didn't crave other meat lived.

Covetousness and greed, wanting what you don't have and wanting more of what you have, can be deadly! Those that wanted the food they didn't have and lusted after it (verses 4-5) found that it cost them their lives. They had food that the Lord had provided, but decided it wasn't enough and they wanted another kind of food. But the food isn't the focus here. They wanted more than what God had provided. There was a point in which the "rabble" and later, other Israelites, began salivating for what they didn't have.

Throughout their complaining and whining, God gave them what they wanted or what they thought they wanted and in the end, it cost them their lives. There are many things we think we want, but desiring anything other than God or the things that God provides is wrong. The Israelites had forgotten again what God had done for them and they were whining about how bad they had it.

I believe the Israelites that didn't "*crave other food*" (**v. 34**) realized just how serious God was. They quickly recognized they needed to leave their needs and desires to God and trust Him, specifically not whining and complaining. When we seek to fill our lives with things other than what God has provided in Himself, we are being disobedient. Today, let us be thankful for where God has brought us and be content with what He has given us. We can depend on Him to know what is best.

## Day 5

### First Read Malachi 4:1-3

Here in the Old Testament, it speaks of the coming of the Lord. Even before Jesus is on earth, we see His coming in Malachi.

Notice the comparison in verses 1 and 2. For those that are arrogant, meaning they follow their own ways and they have not trusted in God, it will be an awful day. They will be punished and they will be turned to stubble. There will be nothing left of them! This lets us know that God takes very seriously those that don't follow Him and those that are evil. We all have the choice to follow Jesus, to obey and trust Him. For those that choose not to follow Him, this passage is very clear about the end results. The best they will ever experience will be here on earth.

However, for those that trust in Jesus, for those who find their hope in Him and are His disciples, they will be free. They will live forever; they will know Jesus and be worshiping Him always. For them, the best isn't on this earth, it's what is to come. However, while on this earth, we seek to love and follow Jesus.

Matthew Henry says of this passage, "Here is a reference to the first and to the second coming of Christ: God has fixed the day of both. Those who do wickedly, who do not fear God's anger, shall feel it. It is certainly to be applied to the Day of Judgment, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire; to execute judgment on the proud, and all that do wickedly. In both, Christ is a rejoicing Light to those who serve him faithfully. By the Sun of Righteousness we understand Jesus Christ. Through him believers are justified and sanctified, and so are brought to see light. His influences render the sinner holy, joyful, and fruitful. It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, brought into the souls of men. Christ gave the Spirit to those who are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a Comforter to them, a Sun and a Shield."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary

Jesus is the one who has given us His righteousness! Not only has He taken our sin away but He has made us white as snow, through the blood of Christ. God, through Jesus, has freed us and we are no longer in bondage to sin. We are free in Christ. Alleluia! Take some time and thank God for this! If you don't know Him, He wants to be your Savior and your God!



## WEEK 45 THE LEVITICAL FEASTS ----- Chris Watson

There are seven Jewish festivals, or feasts, outlined in the Bible. While they are mentioned throughout Scripture, we find instructions for all seven feasts in Leviticus 23. Leviticus 23:2 literally refers to the seven Jewish feasts as “appointed times,” also called “holy convocations.” These were days appointed and ordained by God to be kept to the honor of His name. These times of celebration are important not only to Israel, but also to the overall message of the Bible because each one foreshadows or symbolizes an aspect of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of Leviticus contains God’s instructions to His chosen nation, Israel, on how they were to worship Him. It contains detailed instructions about the duties of the priests as well as instructions on observing and obeying God’s Law and the sacrificial system. God designated seven specific feasts that Israel was to celebrate each year. Each one of these Jewish feasts is significant both in regards to the Lord’s provision for His people and in regards to the foreshadowing of the coming Messiah and His work in redeeming people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. While Christians are no longer under any obligation to observe any of the Old Testament feasts (Colossians 2:16), we should understand their significance and importance.

The feasts often began and ended with a “Sabbath rest,” and the Jews were commanded not to do any customary work on those days. Both the normal weekly Sabbath and the special Sabbaths that were to be observed as part of the Jewish feasts point us to the ultimate Sabbath rest, which is found only in Jesus Christ. It is a rest that Christians experience through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the cross.

Beginning in the spring, the seven Jewish feasts are Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jewish feasts are closely related to Israel’s spring and fall harvests and agricultural seasons. They

were to remind the Israelites each year of God's ongoing protection and provision. But, even more importantly, they foreshadowed the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Not only did they play significant roles in Christ's earthly ministry, but they also symbolize the complete redemptive story of Christ, beginning with His death on the cross as the Passover Lamb and ending with His second coming after which He will "tabernacle" or dwell with His people forever. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jewish-festivals.html>

## Day 1

### Read Exodus 12:1-20 and Leviticus 23:4-8

The first 3 feasts happen back to back, almost simultaneously. The Feast of Unleavened Bread starts the very day after Passover is celebrated. Then, on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Firstfruits begins.

**Passover** reminds us of redemption from sin. It was the time when Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was offered as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. It is on that basis alone that God can justify the ungodly sinner. Just as the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the doorpost of Jewish homes caused the Spirit of the Lord to pass over those homes during the last plague on Egypt (Exodus 12), so those covered by the blood of the Lamb will escape the spiritual death and judgment God will visit upon all who reject Him. Of all the Jewish feasts, Passover is of the greatest importance because the Lord's Supper was a Passover meal (Matthew 26:17–27). In passing the elements and telling the disciples to eat of His body, Jesus was presenting Himself as the ultimate Passover Lamb.

The night of the first Passover was the night of the tenth plague. On that fateful night, God told the Israelites to sacrifice a spotless lamb and mark their doorposts and lintels with its blood (Exodus 12:21–22). Then, when the Lord passed through the nation, He would “pass over” the households that showed the blood (verse 23). In a very real way, the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from death, as it kept the destroyer from entering their homes. The Israelites were saved from the plague and their firstborn children stayed alive. From then on, every firstborn son of the Israelites belonged to the Lord and had to be redeemed with a sacrifice (Exodus 13:1–2, 12; cf. Luke 2:22–24).

The children of Israel in Egypt followed God's command and kept the first Passover. However, none of the Egyptians did so. All through Egypt behind the unmarked, bloodless doorways of



the Egyptians, the firstborn children died at midnight (Exodus 12:21–29). “*There was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.*” (**verse 30b**). This dire judgment finally changed the Egyptian king’s heart and he released the Israelite slaves (verses 31–32).

Along with the instruction to apply the Passover lamb’s blood to their doorposts and lintels, God instituted a commemorative meal: fire-roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). The Lord told the Israelites to “*Observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever*” (**Exodus 12:24 ESV**), even when in a foreign land.

To this day, Jews all over the world celebrate the Passover in obedience to this command. Passover and the story of the exodus have great significance for Christians as well, as Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, including the symbolism of the Passover (Matthew 5:17). Jesus is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 5:12). He was killed at Passover time and the Last Supper was a Passover meal (Luke 22:7–8). By (spiritually) applying His blood to our lives by faith, we trust Christ to save us from death. The Israelites who, in faith, applied the blood of the Paschal lamb to their homes become a model for us. It was not the Israelites’ ancestry or good standing or amiable nature which saved them; it was only the blood of the lamb that made them exempt from death (see John 1:29 and Revelation 5:9–10).<sup>6</sup>

**The Feast of Unleavened Bread** followed immediately after Passover and lasted one week, during which time the Israelites ate no bread with yeast in remembrance of their haste in preparing for their exodus from Egypt. In the New Testament, yeast is often associated with evil (1 Corinthians 5:6–8; Galatians 5:9), and, just as Israel was to remove yeast from their bread, Christians are to purge evil from their lives and live a new life in godliness and righteousness. Christ as our Passover Lamb cleanses us from sin and evil, and by His power and that of the indwelling Holy Spirit,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-Passover.html>

we are freed from sin to leave our old lives behind, just as the Israelites did.

**The Feast of Firstfruits** took place at the beginning of the harvest and signified Israel's gratitude to and dependence upon God. According to Leviticus 23:9–14, an Israelite would bring a sheaf of the first grain of the harvest to the priest, who would wave it before the Lord as an offering. Deuteronomy 26:1–11 states, when the Israelites brought the firstfruits of their harvest before the priest, they were to acknowledge that God had delivered them from Egypt and had given them the Promised Land. This reminds us of Christ's resurrection as He was the *"firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (**1 Corinthians 15:20**). Just as Christ was the first to rise from the dead and receive a glorified body, so shall all those who are born again follow Him, being resurrected to inherit an *"incorruptible body"* (1 Corinthians 15:35–49).<sup>7</sup>

Thank God for His incredible plan. This plan was not a Plan B or an "oh no" plan but God's plan because He knew we would sin. The Passover specifically pointed to Jesus hundreds of years before He was born. Thank God for the ultimate sacrifice.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jewish-festivals.html>

## Day 2

### Read Leviticus 23:9-14 and Acts 2:1-4 and 40-47

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) occurred 50 days after the First-fruits festival and celebrated the end of the grain harvest (the Greek word Pentecost means “fiftieth”). The primary focus of the festival was gratitude to God for the harvest. This feast reminds us of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send “another helper” (John 14:16) who would indwell believers and empower them for ministry. The coming of the Holy Spirit 50 days after Jesus’ resurrection was the guarantee (Ephesians 1:13–14) that the promise of salvation and future resurrection would come to pass. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in every born-again believer is what seals us in Christ and bears witness with our spirit that we are indeed “joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16–17).<sup>8</sup>

Since the Feast of Weeks was one of the “harvest feasts,” the Jews were commanded to “present an offering of new grain to the Lord” (Leviticus 23:16). This offering was to be “two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah” which were made “of fine flour . . . baked with leaven.” The offerings were to be made of the first fruits of that harvest (Leviticus 23:17). Along with the “wave offerings,” they were to offer seven first-year lambs that were without blemish along with one young bull and two rams. Additional offerings are also prescribed in Leviticus and the other passages outline how this feast was to be observed. Another important requirement of this feast was when the Jews harvested their fields, they were required to leave the corners of the field untouched and not gather “any gleanings” from the harvest as a way of providing for the poor and strangers. (Leviticus 23:22).<sup>9</sup>

After the spring feasts conclude with the Feast of Weeks, there is a period of time before the fall feasts begin. This time is spiritually symbolic of the church age in which we live today. Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection are past, we have received the prom-

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid

<sup>9</sup><https://www.gotquestions.org/Feast-of-Weeks.html>

ised Holy Spirit, and now we await His second coming. Just as the spring feasts pointed toward the Messiah's ministry at His first coming, the fall feasts point toward what will happen at His second coming.

We see in our reading today that the Holy Spirit came and did a great work. It is often said, "it would have been cool to have lived in Jesus' time and walked with Him." I agree it would have been , however, Jesus walks with us daily, every second of our day. He is with us even as we sleep. We have the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that came at Pentecost. Thank God for His Spirit.

## Day 3

### Read Numbers 29:1 and Leviticus 23:23-25

The Feast of Trumpets was commanded to be held on the first day of the seventh month and was to be a *“Day of trumpet blast”* **Numbers 29:1** to commemorate the end of the agricultural and festival year. The trumpet blasts were meant to signal to Israel that they were entering a sacred season. The agricultural year was coming to a close; there was to be a reckoning with the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement. The Feast of Trumpets signifies Christ’s second coming. We see trumpets associated with the second coming in verses like **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NKJV)**, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”* Of course, the sounding of the trumpet also indicates the pouring out of God’s wrath on the earth in the book of Revelation. Certainly, this feast points toward the coming Day of the Lord.

The Feast of Trumpets began on the first day (at the new moon) of the seventh month. Its name comes from the command to blow trumpets (Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1-6). It is also called Rosh Hashanah, which means *“Head of the Year,”* because it marks the beginning of the Jewish civil calendar. During this celebration, no work of any kind was to be performed, but burnt offerings and a sin offering were to be brought before the Lord.

In the Leviticus passage, the words trumpet blasts are a translation of the Hebrew word *teruah*, which means *“a shout”* or *“a blowing.”* It appears that the shofar (ram’s horn) was to be blown at this time, as it was on the other new moons (Psalm 81:3). Jewish tradition indicates that both the ram’s horn and the priestly silver horns (*hazozerah*) were used in the Feast of Trumpets.

The Feast of Trumpets was important for several reasons. First, it commemorated the end of the agricultural and festival year. Also, the Day of Atonement fell on the tenth day of this month and the Festival of Booths began on the fifteenth day. The blowing of the

trumpets on the first day of the month heralded a solemn time of preparation for the Day of Atonement; this preparation time was called “Ten Days of Repentance” or the “Days of Awe.” The trumpet sound was an alarm of sorts and can be understood as a call to introspection and repentance.<sup>10</sup>

In the New Testament, we see that the Lord’s Second Coming will be accompanied by the sound of a trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Each of the judgments in Revelation 8-9 is also signaled by a trumpet. Just as the shofar called the Jewish nation to turn their attention to the Lord and ready themselves for the Day of Atonement, so will the “trump of God” call us to heaven and warn the world of coming judgment.

Are you right before God? Have you trusted Him as Savior? If not why not call on the Lord now to save you from your sins? If you are saved, ask the Lord in what areas of your life He needs to do a work. Take some time this week for introspection and repentance. Remember it's God's grace and kindness that leads us to repentance.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Feast-of-Trumpets.html>

## Day 4

### Read Leviticus 23:27-28 and Hebrews 10:1-12

The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-28), also known as Yom Kippur, was the most solemn holy day of all the Israelite feasts and festivals, occurring once a year on the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. On that day, the high priest was to perform elaborate rituals to atone for the sins of the people. Described in Leviticus 16:1-34, the atonement ritual began with Aaron, or subsequent high priests of Israel, coming into the holy of holies. The solemnity of the day was underscored by God telling Moses to warn Aaron not to come into the Most Holy Place whenever he felt like it, only on this special day once a year, lest he die (v. 2). This was not a ceremony to be taken lightly and the people were to understand that atonement for sin was to be done God's way.

Before entering the tabernacle, Aaron was to bathe and put on special garments (v. 4), then sacrifice a bull for a sin offering for himself and his family (v. 6, 11). The blood of the bull was to be sprinkled on the ark of the covenant. Then Aaron was to bring two goats, one to be sacrificed "*Because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been*" (v. 16), and its blood was sprinkled on the ark of the covenant. The other goat was used as a scapegoat. Aaron placed his hands on its head, confessed over it the rebellion and wickedness of the Israelites, and sent the goat out with an appointed man who released it into the wilderness (v. 21). The goat carried on itself all the sins of the people, which were forgiven for another year (v. 30).

The symbolic significance of the ritual, particularly to Christians, is seen first in the washing and cleansing of the high priest, the man who released the goat, and the man who took the sacrificed animals outside the camp to burn the carcasses (v. 4, 24, 26, 28). Israelite washing ceremonies were required often throughout the Old Testament and symbolized the need for mankind to be cleansed of sin. But it wasn't until Jesus came to make the "once

for all” sacrifice that the need for cleansing ceremonies ceased (Hebrews 7:27). The blood of bulls and goats could only atone for sins if the ritual was continually done year after year, while Christ’s sacrifice was sufficient for all the sins of all who would ever believe in Him. When His sacrifice was made, He declared, *“It is finished”* **John 19:30 (NIV)**. He then sat down at the right hand of God, and no further sacrifice was ever needed (Hebrews 10:1-12).

The sufficiency and completeness of the sacrifice of Christ is also seen in the two goats. The blood of the first goat was sprinkled on the ark, ritually appeasing the wrath of God for another year. The second goat removed the sins of the people into the wilderness where they were forgotten and no longer clung to the people. Sin is both propitiated and expiated God’s way—only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Propitiation is the act of appeasing the wrath of God, while expiation is the act of atoning for sin and removing it from the sinner. Both together are achieved eternally by Christ. When He sacrificed Himself on the cross, He appeased God’s wrath against sin, taking that wrath upon Himself: *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”* **Romans 5:9 (NIV)**. The removal of sin by the second goat was a living parable of the promise that God would remove our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and that He would remember them no more (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17). Jews today still celebrate the annual Day of Atonement, which falls on different days each year in September-October, traditionally observing this holy day with a 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services.<sup>11</sup>

Take some time today to thank God that He made an atonement for our sins. Some have broken up the word atonement like this, at / one / ment. God did this for us through Jesus so we could be “at one” with God. Thank Him for the ultimate sacrifice.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Day-Atonement-Yom-Kippur.html>



## Day 5

### Read Leviticus 23:33-37

The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Booths and Sukkot, is the seventh and last feast that the Lord commanded Israel to observe and one of the three feasts that Jews were to observe each year by going to *“Appear before the Lord your God in the place which He shall choose”* **Deuteronomy 16:16 (NIV)**. The importance of the Feast of Tabernacles can be seen in how many places it is mentioned in Scripture. In the Bible we see many important events that took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. For one thing, it was at this time that Solomon’s Temple was dedicated to the Lord (1 Kings 8:2).

It was also at the Feast of Tabernacles that the Israelites, who had returned to rebuild the temple, gathered together to hear Ezra proclaim the Word of God to them (Nehemiah 8). Ezra’s preaching resulted in a great revival as the Israelites confessed their sins and repented of them. It was also during this Feast that Jesus said, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* **John 7:37–39 (NKJV)**

The Feast of Tabernacles takes place on the 15th of the Hebrew month Tishri. This was the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar and usually occurs in late September to mid-October. The feast began five days after the Day of Atonement and at the time the fall harvest had just been completed. It was a time of joyous celebration as the Israelites celebrated God’s continued provision for them in the current harvest and remembered His provision and protection during the 40 years in the wilderness.

As one of the three feasts that all “native born” male Jews were commanded to participate in, the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned multiple times in Scripture, sometimes called the Feast of the Ingathering, the Feast to the Lord, or the Feast of Booths (Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 16:13). As one of the pilgrim feasts (when Jewish males were commanded to go to Jerusalem), it was

also the time when they brought their tithes and offerings to the Temple (Deuteronomy 16:16). With the influx of people coming to Jerusalem at that time, we can only imagine what the scene must have been like. Thousands upon thousands of people coming together to remember and celebrate God's deliverance and His provision, all living in temporary shelters or booths as part of the requirements of the feast. During the eight-day period, so many sacrifices were made that it required all twenty-four divisions of priests to be present to assist in the sacrificial duties.

We find God's instructions for celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23, given at a point in history right after God had delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt. The feast was to be celebrated each year on "*The fifteenth day of this seventh month*" and was to run for seven days (Leviticus 23:34). Like all feasts, it begins with a "*holy convocation*" or Sabbath day when the Israelites were to stop working to set aside the day for worshiping God. On each day of the feast, they were to offer an "*Offering made by fire to the Lord*" and then after seven days of feasting, again the eighth day was to be "*a holy convocation*" when they were to cease from work and offer another sacrifice to God (Leviticus 23). Lasting eight days, the Feast of Tabernacles begins and ends with a Sabbath day of rest. During the eight days of the feast, the Israelites would dwell in booths or tabernacles that were made from the branches of trees (Leviticus 23:40–42).

The Feast of Tabernacles, like all the feasts, was instituted by God as a way of reminding Israelites in every generation of their deliverance by God from Egypt. The feasts are also significant in that they foreshadow the work and actions of the coming Messiah. Much of Jesus' public ministry took place in conjunction with the Holy Feasts set forth by God.

The three pilgrim feasts where all Jewish males were commanded to "*appear before the Lord in the place he chooses*" are each very important in regards to the life of Christ and His work of redemption. We know with certainty that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are symbolic of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. Likewise, we know that Pentecost, which marked the

beginning of the Feast of Weeks, was the time of Jesus' bodily ascension. And most scholars would agree that the Feast of Tabernacles is symbolic of Christ's Second Coming when He will establish His earthly kingdom.

Are you ready for His second coming? Are you looking for Him? It could be any day now. Make sure you are ready for the time is coming!



## **WEEK 46 MIRIAM'S LEPROSY -----Dennis Watson**

One of the things we see time and time again in the Bible is that God seeks to display His glory through people—willing vessels that open their lives up for God to work through. In all these cases, it is not about the person, but about God who is working in and through the person to show His glory. Moses was a humble servant of the Lord. Other people became envious of Moses and sought to undermine his leadership and authority. However, it backfired.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Numbers 12:1-2**

How often is there conflict in our churches, homes, and families? What is the source of such griping and complaining? It seems to be a bad case of pride which presents itself as jealousy and envy. Envy is wanting something someone else has. It may be a thing or a position. It says, “I deserve this more than you and I should have it.” In these verses, we see this was coming from a very unlikely source—Moses’ older sister and brother, Miriam and Aaron. Can you imagine that? This is a family feud. The “reason” for the attack, or so Miriam said, was because Moses’ second wife was an Ethiopian woman, but verse two really tells the story. They were saying, “Who does Moses think he is?” They were envious!

I wonder how many churches, men, and women have gotten off course because of jealousy and envy? I wonder how many churches have split and homes broken because of pride? What about you? Is there envy and jealousy in your life? As you look around the church or look at your family and neighbors, are you holding on to envy? In Philippians 4, Paul spoke about being content. If you are content with where you are and where God has you, then you can say, “This is where I am and it is where God has me.” This is liberating! Thank God for your circumstances and serve Him right where you are! Ask God to enable you to be faithful in the place He has you.

## Day 2

### Read Numbers 12:3-10

**James 4:6 (NKJV)** says, *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* Yesterday, we saw the pride of Miriam and Aaron that resulted in envy. Today, we see that Moses was the most *“humble man on the face of the earth.”* **Numbers 12:3 (NIV)**

What an incredible contrast! Miriam and Aaron were proudly saying, “We deserve what Moses has.” Moses was humbly saying, “I am only doing what God has given me to do.” This task of leading the people was not Moses’ idea; it came from the Lord. Moses did not apply or lobby for the job. God, in His grace, called Moses to this task.

God met with the three siblings. God reminded the three of them that He spoke with Moses face to face. He did not deal with Moses like a prophet, through dreams and visions, but He met with and spoke to Moses. God was making it clear to Miriam and Aaron, with Moses listening, that Moses was in this role by God’s determination. In His anger, God caused Miriam to have leprosy. God punished Miriam because in her pride, she envied and undermined a humble man. Since God defended Moses, he did not have to defend himself.

I am very thankful that I do not get sick every time I complain, everytime I am envious, or everytime I am prideful. You can always look around and find someone who has it better than you. Don’t live life too horizontally! Seek to spend more time looking up to God and living vertically. Living vertically equips you to live horizontally. Ask God to enable you to have the grace to simply do His will without pride or envy.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **Read Philippians 2:1-11**

Moses was an amazing leader. God says that Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth at the time the book of Numbers was written. Humility is thinking of others as more important than yourself. Moses was always thinking of the people he was called to lead. He was caring for and providing for them. Moses was a type of Christ. A type represents a resemblance between something present and something in the future. Moses was humble, but Jesus is the full expression of humility. Moses thought of others and acted on their behalf as mediator. Jesus gave up Himself, His rights, and His glory as the Son of God. He became a man, He died on the cross, and He took our punishment. This is what we see in today's passage. Jesus became our substitute and died in our place for our sins. He made Himself nothing and gave up His privileged position to become a humble servant and die for us.

The opposite of humility is pride. Pride is seeking our way and our recognition at the expense of all others. The first four verses of this passage tell us not to seek our own way and advancement but to be united in mind with others and to have the same mind as Christ. A mind governed by humility, seeking the best of and for other people.

Think about Jesus and His self-sacrifice. Ask God for the grace to have the same mind that Jesus had. Consider others and what they need. Jesus first lived vertically and then horizontally.

## Day 4

### Read Numbers 12:11-16

Aaron and leprous Miriam were on one side and God who judged Miriam was on the other, which left Moses in the middle. Moses was the man who acted as mediator. Aaron cried out to Moses to ask God for mercy for Miriam and Moses interceded and God healed her. Miriam had to stay outside of the camp for seven days, probably because she was considered unclean from the leprosy.

A huge aspect of humility is to live and operate without being vindictive. Vindictive means to be spiteful, bitter, to act in such a way as to hurt someone because of something they have done. Remember, humility says, "I am only doing what God wants me to do." Moses served God and others entirely because of God's call on his life. When things did not go his way or the people opposed him, he refused to become vindictive. He was in tune with God's will and plan.

Moses maintained his integrity through this, but what do you suppose Miriam learned from her experience? I hope that the extreme judgment of God on Miriam woke her up. Certainly she would really give serious thought before complaining again.

If you have a tendency to complain, ask God for grace to stop complaining. If you have been mistreated by someone, practice humility and do as the English Poet Alexander Pope said—forgive. He wrote, "To err is human; to forgive, divine."



## Day 5

### First Read Haggai 2:20-23

We have previously talked about how important people mentioned in the Old Testament are; too often we read over people who appear to be insignificant. Don't miss what God may be revealing in the details. Zerubbabel was the leader of the people who returned from exile. He was a leader, perhaps a King or, at least, considered governor. He was a descendant of King David. In this passage in Haggai we get a hint of things to come. God told Haggai, the prophet, to give encouraging words to the people and then a word of encouragement to Zerubbabel. The people under Zerubbabel's leadership were rebuilding the temple. There were attacks from the outside and attacks from the inside. Zerubbabel was a blue collar king. He did not deal from a throne or wear a crown. He went to work. When God sent the message to King Zerubbabel, He called him "*my servant.*" But God called him something else; He called him "*a signet ring.*"

A signet ring was a ring worn by a king that represented his authority. The king would use the ring to mark a document with his signature. When the king sent out a message, hot wax was used to drip on the rolled up document to seal it and the king would press the image of his ring in the wax. It was his official signature. God tells Zerubbabel that he was God's authority like a signet ring. Zerubbabel was a descendant of King David and in the line of Jesus. God was encouraging him to stay on the course because the Messiah would come through his family! What a word of encouragement. You cannot give up, grow weary, or quit because you play a necessary role in God's plan.



## WEEK 47 ISRAEL SPIES OUT THE LAND-----Chris Watson

### Day 1

#### Read Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33

It wasn't called the Promised Land just by chance. It was the Promised Land because the Lord had promised Abraham and all of those after him that the land would be theirs. Caleb knew this; he remembered the promise and knew it was from God. The verse saying, "we can surely do it" may initially look like Caleb is saying we, by ourselves, can do this. However, we know Caleb trusted and followed God and we will see this in the weeks to come. He wasn't depending on his own efforts, but trusting the Lord. As a spy, he had seen what the other spies had seen, but his view was different; he had God's vantage point, he trusted Him.

We must trust God and His Word. We can either listen to the opinions of man or we can follow the Truth of God. Scripture tells us that He is the way, the truth, and the life! When we put our hope and everything we are in Him, we will not be disappointed. However, when we put our hope in our own power and what we can do, we will either be let down in the end, or we will be like the rest of the spies in verses 4-15 and cower down in defeat before we even begin.

The enemy wants us defeated. One thing the enemy loves is a defeated believer. Do you know a defeated believer? Are you one? Do you walk all day in defeat? Are you one who can never seem to put all your hope in Christ? **Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)** says, *"But they who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."* As we live in the presence of the Lord and walk with Him, we don't have to cower down and live in defeat or fear. Scripture gives us many promises of who we are in Christ and what God's plans are for us. We are children of the One True King!

May we live like it and move forward with the truth of Jesus. I don't want to cower down in fear. Do you? We don't have to; we know the King of the universe and He has conquered fear! Lay your burdens, fears, anxieties, etc., on Him today and continue on. Don't listen to others when they say you can't or it won't work. If you are following God and His Word, move forward. Don't look back.

## Day 2

### Read Numbers 14:1-10

Here we go again. The Israelites are complaining and grumbling against God. This time, not only are they grumbling, but we see in verse 3 they are insinuating that the Lord is trying to kill them. Remember, they had been promised, through Abraham, the Promised Land would be theirs someday. This promise had been passed down to other leaders, including Moses. They were following God's plan for them, but when opposition came along and it looked like the odds were against them, they began questioning God and desiring to be back in Egypt in slavery!

This sounds bad, doesn't it? But wait, it gets worse. When Joshua and Caleb spoke up and told the people to continue and take the land that God was giving to them, the people wanted to stone them! These two men, who were following what God wanted, were now being turned against by their own people because they were choosing to trust God and not themselves. They held on to the words of God that had been given to Abraham and passed on to subsequent generations.

Unfortunately, you and I do this. Yes, you and I! When we have a word or promise from the Lord, either through His Word or through prayer, and we know it is true because it aligns with Scripture, we are to follow and trust God in that situation. However, during that trusting or following God, we often face "obstacles," those things which sometimes make it harder to follow God or trust His promises. Truth is, we are not promised an easy road as we follow Christ. Scripture tells us that in this world we will have trouble, but to have hope because Christ has overcome the world! (John 16:33)

When we face difficulties, struggles, and hard times, the last thing we need to do is "run from God" or "place blame on God." We need to trust God, the One who is in control, the One who holds the whole world in His hands. Ask God today to help you trust Him when it's easy and when it's hard, knowing that He has it all in His hands!

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Numbers 14:11-24

Here again, we see Moses as the mediator between the Israelites and God. He asks God to forgive them and reminds Him (as if God needed reminding) where He had brought them from and what He had done. God forgives them, as we see in verse 20. God is the God of love and grace, but also the God of justice. Moses saw their sin and problems and pleaded for them in their time of rebellion. We need to do this too. We need to plead for God to speak to and show mercy on those who are in rebellion to Him, but at the same time, do what it takes to get their attention and wake them up.

Our only hope of God's mercy and grace is through Jesus Christ. Our works, nice words, service, and anything good that we think we have done, will not measure up. We are all guilty, but the grace of God covers our sin. We see though, as in the case of the Israelites, there are often consequences for sin.

If you have not called on Jesus to forgive you of your sins, seek Him now. If you have done this, thank Him for your salvation and that He is the mediator between us and God. We should also realize we don't have to continue in sin; we don't have to continue in disobedience. We died to sin and disobedience and if we continue to live in it like the Israelites, we will experience consequences. May we be like Caleb and follow Jesus with our whole hearts and have no regrets! Who are you following today? Who are you seeking? Do you want the consequences of your sin or the blessings of following God? Seek Him!

## Day 4

### Read Numbers 14:26-45

Sin is nasty; it destroys, kills, and keeps us apart from God. Scripture tells us that the devil's plan and desire is to kill, steal, and destroy. He was working on the Israelites, for sure. Their continuous disobedience got them where they were. The consequences for every male over 20, except Caleb and Joshua, were that they would not enter the Promised Land. Not only that, but they would die out in the land wandering. If that wasn't bad enough, verse 33 tells us that their children would suffer because of their parents' unfaithfulness. Here is proof that our choice to seek and follow anything but God not only hurts us, but all of those around us. It's said that, "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay" (unknown). So true!

Recently, while driving on the interstate with my family, I heard Landon talking to his mom in a mean and nasty tone. After getting on to him I asked him, "Is that how we talk to our mom and is that what God wants us to do?" Getting no answer from him, I asked again and still I received no answer. After a third time with still no answer, I got off at the next exit to take care of some discipline. He knew what was going on; he knew he was about to be punished, so guess what? He finally answered my question. We see some similarities here; when the Israelites realized what their punishment was and that it sounded like it would be better to do what God said, they changed their minds. They were not necessarily sorry, but they knew what was going to happen. However, they had continued in sin and God had already told them their consequence.

Of course, they still went on and tried to do things their own way and were defeated because God was not with them. Once again, they didn't listen to the Lord (through Moses) and they were attacked and beaten down.

Today, may we follow God. May we do what He shows us in His Word and what He reveals to us. May we not delay and may we not pass our disobedience on to our children and those who come behind us. May we seek to love Jesus always and lead others to love Him too, and may our actions show it!

## Day 5

### Read Zechariah 2:10-12

**2 Peter 3:9** says, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* It’s God’s desire that everyone come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and Zechariah confirms this. **Zechariah 2:11a (NIV)** says, *“Many nations will be joined with the Lord.”* The Gospel isn’t just for God’s chosen people, the Israelites, but for anyone who would call on the name of the Lord. Isn’t this wonderful?

The verses of scripture we read today also speak of Jesus. They don’t use the name Jesus, but the very fact that *“Nations will be joined with the Lord”* is an indication that God will one day make a way for every tribe and nation to be saved by calling on the name of Jesus. **John 1:14 (NIV)** says *“The Word became flesh and made its dwelling among us.”* Jesus made earth His temporary dwelling so He could show us the way to make heaven our eternal dwelling, but it’s not just for us. It’s for all the nations: the red, yellow, black, and white. It’s for those across the street and those across the ocean. I imagine heaven will be more diverse than we ever thought possible. Praise the Lord!

May we be an avenue in which Jesus is shown to others. **Revelation 7:9-10 (NIV)** says, *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”*

Thank You, Lord, that I will be a part of that multitude! Who are we sharing Jesus with so that others will as well?





## **Week 48 KORAH'S REBELLION AND AARON'S ROD BUDDER**

-----Dennis Watson

What an incredible biblical event the Exodus was! According to Adam Clarke's Commentary, there could have been 3,263,000 people who left Egypt in the Exodus event. That is a lot of people. It is often said that ministry would be easy if it weren't for the people! Of course, this is a silly statement because there would be no need for ministry if there were no people. Moses and Aaron had a real challenge on their hands. This week, we look at two events in which the leadership authority of Moses and Aaron are affirmed.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Numbers 16:1-19**

The people of God, after the Exodus, were not a spiritually minded people. Although they had seen the many miracles of God before and after the Exodus, they were still not willing to see the hand of God. One of the great problems facing people in churches, homes and businesses is that of authority. Someone has to take the lead. Parents have authority in the home, teachers in the classroom, managers in businesses, and civil authorities in cities, states and nations. When that authority breaks down, our homes, our churches, our businesses and our communities are in trouble.

The situation in today's text is one where the authority of Moses and Aaron is challenged. A Levite, by the name of Korah, begins to be critical of Moses and Aaron and then begins to talk with others who were responsible for the care of items of the tabernacle. Korah was a descendant of Kohath. Here is what Warren Wiersbe says about this group:

"The Kohathites carried the tabernacle furniture when Israel marched to a new location, and they camped on the south side of the tabernacle, across from Gad, Simeon, and Reuben. Perhaps

this explains how Korah was able to get Dathan, Abiram, and On, three Reubenites, to join him in his crusade.”<sup>12</sup>

As sad as it was, this happens too often. Their complaint against Moses and Aaron was they were taking too much upon themselves and exalting themselves above the others.

J. Vernon McGee describes the issue that is usually the real problem:

Now, actually, the charges made in this rebellion were not true to the facts. They were absolutely unfounded. Moses was not taking too much upon himself. If we go back in his history, we find that when God called him, he refused. He didn't feel capable of leading these people. Even after God had trained him in the wilderness, he didn't want the job. He asked for a helper, and God gave him Aaron. Moses was the meekest man on earth. When Joshua wanted to silence the prophets, Moses said that he wished all of God's people might prophesy. He didn't have a jealous bone in his body. My friend, we have seen that Moses was not sinless, but he certainly was not guilty of taking too much upon himself. What was really the root trouble here? It was the jealousy of Korah.<sup>13</sup>

Moses was a humble leader. However, the most important thing about Moses was that he was God's choice to lead the people. This does not mean he was the most capable or best qualified, but he was chosen by God and that made him the most qualified.

The stage was set for a showdown for God to affirm those whom He had called to lead His people. God would show who the real authorities were.

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<sup>12</sup> Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.

<sup>13</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

## Day 2

### Read Numbers 16:20-35

God honors those He chooses to be in authority and He takes seriously the task He has called them to do. He also expects other people, and in particular those under their authority, to respect and follow their lead. David had been chosen by God to be king, but Saul was still king although God had rejected him. Saul was trying to kill David. On at least two occasions, it appeared Saul had been delivered into David's hands for him to kill. On one such occasion, David cut off a corner of Saul's robe and later showed it to Saul so he would know that David did not take advantage of the opportunity. David regretted what he had done saying to his men, "*The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.*" **1 Samuel 24:6 (NKJV)**. David had respect and honor for God's man of authority although he was behaving like a madman.

Korah and his followers were rebelling against both Moses and Aaron. There was no valid reason for this. It was simply a case of jealousy and wanting to be in their leadership role. Moses and Aaron were the chosen vessels of God. God was about to do a "new thing" to show who His chosen leaders were.

God told Moses and the people to separate themselves from these rebellious people because He was going to "*consume them.*" Moses and Aaron once again intercede for the people. God tells Moses to get the congregation away from Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Moses tells the people that he had done the things he had done "*Not of my own will.*" **(Verse 28)** The Lord was going to demonstrate that He had sent Moses and Aaron to lead and be the ones in authority. God would "*Create a new thing, and the earth would open its mouth and swallow them up.*" **(Verse 16:30)** This is exactly what happened to Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their households. God caused the leaders of the rebellion and their households to be swallowed up by an earthquake. Then the

two-hundred and fifty others who joined in by burning incense in the bronze censers were consumed by fire.

God judged the rebels who challenged Moses and Aaron, but more importantly, God affirmed Moses and Aaron as His chosen leaders. They may not have been deemed the smartest or humanly most qualified, but God's call qualified them.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Matthew 28:18-20

This passage is known as the Great Commission. In verse eighteen, Jesus acknowledges that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. God placed all things at His feet and before Him every knee will bow. Jesus is the ultimate authority. In the Great Commission, Jesus confers authority on believers to go into the whole world and make disciples. God gave authority to Moses and Aaron to lead the people. Their authority came from God. God gave all authority to Jesus and Jesus gave His followers authority. This authority is not a thing to be grasped, but to be humbly used to serve Jesus and others.

Paul writes in several places that the church is the body of Christ and each part of the body has a job to do. You can read this in Ephesians 4:11-14. To the church, God gave leaders with authority to lead and guide God's church. This authority is not to be used to lord over anyone, but to provide humble leadership. Jesus had authority, but He led gently and then laid down His life. In fact, in John 10:18, Jesus speaks again of His authority which is seen as humble:

*"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."* **John 10:18 (NKJV)**

Another picture of God conveying authority on Jesus was at His baptism. God affirmed Him in His baptism with these words:

*"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* **Matthew 3:17 (NKJV)**

Then, in the resurrection, God confirmed the authority of Jesus.

In Hebrews, the writer says the people in the church are to obey and submit to those who exercise authority over them:

*"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."* **Hebrews 13:17 (NKJV)**

J. Vernon McGee explains this:

There are some ministers who use this verse and say that the members of their church are to obey them. However, it seems rather that the thought here is of leadership. He is speaking of spiritual leaders, and spiritual leaders are to lead folk to Christ. If a man is presenting Christ and is attempting to bring people into the presence of Christ, then that is a man to whom you should be loyal. But to be loyal to a man simply because he is the pastor of a church is not what Paul is talking about at all.<sup>14</sup>

When God places leaders in the body, they need to be followed. Not without careful wisdom, but with humility giving consideration to the leaders as being God's instruments. Someone has to lead and God has given such servant-leaders to His church.

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<sup>14</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

## Day 4

### Read Numbers 17:1-8

What a big deal this affirmation was! God affirmed the priesthood of Aaron. The people were questioning the leadership status of Aaron just as they did Moses. God affirmed the priesthood of Aaron with resurrection. The resurrection is life out of death. This was not a case of reviving. Each of the tribal leaders were to have a rod with their name on it. The twelve rods were then placed in the tabernacle before the Lord and the rod that blossomed would be the man God chose. All of these rods were dry, dead and without life or any hope of life. The day after the placement of the rods in the tabernacle, Aaron's rod not only budded, but produced ripe almonds. One out of the twelve dead rods came to life and produced fruit. Clearly the priesthood of Aaron was affirmed by God through resurrection.

Now this same thing is true of Jesus. His place as our great high priest was affirmed and confirmed by His resurrection:

The priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ rests upon the fact of His resurrection. We are told very frankly in the seventh chapter of Hebrews that if He were here on earth, He would not be a priest. He did not come from the priestly tribe of Levi. His resurrection made Him a priest. Then it tells us not every man becomes a priest. *"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."* **Hebrews 5:4 (NKJV)** Aaron was God's called priest. The evidence was the budded rod -- the resurrection.<sup>15</sup>

But this affirmation of priesthood goes further. Look at this:

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*

**1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)**

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<sup>15</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.



Our standing before God is made possible, confirmed, and affirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This confirms the resurrection He has made possible for us. We were dead, but He has made us alive. Life out of death is only possible by the miraculous power of God!

There is not a priesthood in the world today recognized by God, except the priesthood of believers in His church!

## Day 5

### Read Numbers 16:37-40 and 17:10-13

Aaron's dead, dry rod that bloomed and produced fruit was totally a miracle of God that anticipated the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ and even anticipated our own resurrection. The theme of resurrection is absolutely essential to Biblical truth. God told Moses to keep Aaron's rod that budded in the Ark of the Covenant "*Before the testimony, to be a sign against the rebels.*" God wanted the people to be reminded that He had confirmed Aaron's priesthood so they would not complain. According to Hebrews 9:4, also in the Ark of the Covenant, was a pot of manna and the Ten Commandments. These were to remind the people of God's activity on their behalf.

God gave these and other reminders for the people of Israel to follow and obey God. Warren Wiersbe says that believers today also have an abundance of reminders:

To encourage believers today to be obedient children, the Lord has given us His Word (John 17:17), the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20), the Lord's Supper, reminding us of the death of Christ and His promised return (11:23-34; 1 John 3:1-3), and the interceding Savior in heaven (Heb. 4:14-16; Rom. 8:34). Before we judge God's ancient people, perhaps we'd better examine our own hearts to see if we've submitted to the authority of His Word and of His appointed leaders.<sup>16</sup>

God has always had a plan for His people. Whether it was moving three million people out of slavery in Egypt or leading a body of believers to be on mission with God in His world, God has always had people of authority in place to lead the way. It is significant that God's people be reminded to follow the leaders He has in place. I like to put it this way, if I, as a pastor of God's church, am leading them, the people should be willing to follow. If my leading is biblical, moral, and ethical, then, the people should follow. Everyone has an opinion and we need to be free to express our opinions. However, there comes a time and place to follow those entrusted to lead.

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<sup>16</sup>Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch



## **WEEK 49 MOSES DISOBEYS GOD-----Dennis Watson**

Some of the saddest words in the Bible are those uttered by God in Numbers 14:26-35 to Moses regarding the unbelief of the people for not obeying Him to go in and enter the land. For each of the forty days the spies continued to spy out the land, the people would wander in the wilderness for a year, which totaled forty years! Not only that, all the people over twenty years of age would die during the wandering. Consequences of rebellion and disobedience can be very impacting for many people. We read here that because of the negative report of ten of the twelve spies, millions would die. The only two people over twenty who would not die but would enter the land of promise were Joshua and Caleb. They were the two spies who encouraged the people to go in because God would give them victory. This week, there is another time of grumbling and complaining and Moses, the mediator, gets in the middle again. However, this time he loses control! We will look at Moses' anger and the consequences.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Numbers 20:1-5**

It appears that from a time perspective, about 38 years of wilderness wandering has brought us to this point because of rebellion and disobedience. The people have wandered for nearly 40 years and by this time, most of those people who were over 20 years of age at the time of rebellion had died, including Moses' sister Miriam.

“This section, from Numbers chapters 14 to 20, is the only section which deals with the forty years of wandering in the wilderness - and that's not very much. We have only a few incidents that took place during these forty years. Israel is out of God's will and there is little to tell. We can talk about Israel being God's chosen people, but they didn't amount to anything except when they were in God's will. And that is still true today. It is also true of you and me that we don't amount to anything when we are

out of the will of God. When you and I are not functioning in the body of believers, exercising the gift that He has given to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are as unnecessary as a fifth leg on a cow. Actually, we get in the way."<sup>17</sup>

This passage is what appears to be the seventh murmuring of the people. Again, they are complaining about not having water to drink. They are on the edge of the Promised Land that flows with much water, along with milk and honey, yet they are complaining rather than trusting. It is so important to keep your eyes focused on your destination, where you are going, more than on your current circumstances. Their longing was to go back to Egypt, back to their origination, rather than continue on to the destination. Every July 4th, I, along with other family members and 60,000 of my closest friends, embark on Peachtree Road to run the annual Peachtree Road Race. I can't tell you how many times along the way I have wanted to quit, to just go home and forget it. However, I have in mind the finish line and the coveted collector's t-shirt. I want to finish. When I get within eyesight of the finish line I am invigorated to really hit it hard one more time. The race is not about starting, but about finishing. They were too close to the finish line to quit now.

Be encouraged on your faith journey. When things become difficult, don't complain or murmur. Instead, pray! Keep your eyes on the finish line. This is the only way to make sense of the journey!

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<sup>17</sup>Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

## Day 2

### Read Numbers 20:6-9

The people complained, but Moses and Aaron went to the door of the tabernacle and fell on their faces before the Lord. Which do you do? When trouble comes, do you complain or pray? Do you fret and agonize or do you seek the One who can do something? On this occasion, there is nothing recorded that Moses or Aaron said. They simply fell before the Lord to seek His wisdom, presence, and provision. We do not know how long they were there, but God spoke to them and gave them the solution. God is able to solve our problems no matter what the circumstances are, provided we trust Him and do His will.

God instructs Moses and Aaron to take the rod, gather the people, and to speak to the rock in front of the people. This is different from the account in Exodus 17 where God told Moses to take the rod and strike the rock before the elders. The rod represented the power, presence, and authority of God. In today's passage, Moses was to gather all of the people and speak to the rock. There were many more people and the instructions were different. God provides for our needs and does so in different ways. On this occasion, God told Moses to speak to the rock. Why the difference? I have no idea. Some commentators suggest that since the rock was Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:4), He was only struck or crucified once for sin. Once again, I am not sure. All we know is that on this occasion, it was clear they were to take the rod, gather all the people, speak to the rock, and the rock would *"yield its water."* We see in verse 9 that the first thing Moses did was to take the rod and go as God had told him. In all of our dealings with the Lord, starting and finishing in obedience is the whole deal. Not just starting, but starting and finishing in accordance with God's instructions.

As we will see in a few days, Moses started well, but all did not end well. Seek Him and trust and obey—fully!

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Hebrews 4:14-16

Yesterday, we saw Moses as the mediator, once again standing between God and the people of Israel. God gave him a task to do in a specific way. Tomorrow we will see Moses' failure and the consequences. Moses was a man who stood in the gap for the people, often pleading for God's forgiveness on their behalf. However, Moses was just a man and a sinful man at that. What happened when Moses sinned? Who would stand in the gap and plead on his behalf as a mediator? What happens when the mediator needs a mediator?

Some people have said Moses was the most impressive man in the Bible, other than Jesus. He was by far the greatest leader, apart from Jesus. However, as a man he was sinful. It took him only forty hours to lead the people out of Egypt, but then forty years to lead them to the Promised Land. In Hebrews 4:14-16, we read about our Great High Priest who was in every way superior to Moses. Moses was a man. Jesus was fully man as God intended and He was also fully God. He was sinless and was not only our Great High Priest, He was our sacrifice for sin. The generation of adults who left Egypt all died without entering the Promised Land except Joshua and Caleb. Even Moses, though permitted to see the land, could not enter in because of his sin.

Jesus is the perfect High Priest who will lead us into the eternal land of promise, the new heaven and the new earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Moses succeeded in many ways, but he also failed. Jesus never fails!

Rejoice in the faithfulness of Jesus who never fails! He will finish the task and lead us into the eternity of promise.

## Day 4

### Read Numbers 20:10-13

It really seems that everyone has their breaking point. Moses was no exception. He was perhaps the greatest leader who ever lived, other than Jesus, but he was human and we see today he reached his breaking point. There's no excuse, but for about forty years he led a very difficult group of people on what should have been an eleven day journey! The reason it took forty years was because of the rebellion and disobedience of the people.

Moses received his instructions from God. He and Aaron were to take the rod, gather the people, and then SPEAK to the rock. He did it all, but then lost his cool and exploded. Instead of speaking to the rock, he lashed out at the people, calling them "rebels" and even taking credit for getting the water from the rock and then, in a rage, he hit the rock twice with the rod. It worked! Water gushed out from the rock. The people got what they needed. For a pragmatist, this was good—it worked! This was not the end of the story. Sure, it worked. God is the One who worked. He honored the intercession and provided what the people needed. However, God was not pleased because He was dishonored before the people.

God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8). Moses and Aaron did not obey God and they did not give Him glory and credit before the people. The problem was that they dishonored God. Their testimony, or the testimony of God working in and through them, was lost. They squandered an opportunity to give God glory for what He alone could do.

Arrogance, anger, and frustration can take its toll. God's testimony can be hijacked when His people lose control and fail to keep in mind all we do in God's name is for His glory alone. Moses forfeited his opportunity to enter the Promised Land! "How unfair of God," you may say. However, God is serious about His name! In fact, the third commandment is about not taking the name of the Lord in vain.

In all things, exalt God's name, giving Him praise and glory!



## DAY 5

### Read Malachi 3:1

This passage in Malachi was prophesied about 500 BC. So we make a 900 year jump from where we have been to see this prophecy about Jesus that was made some 500 years before His birth.

The prophecy regards two messengers. The first is obviously about John the Baptist. This verse in Malachi is applied to John the Baptist by Jesus in Matthew 11:9-10. Malachi is saying John the Baptist would be God's messenger to prepare the way for His coming. John the Baptist came preparing the way for Jesus' first coming as a baby born of a virgin. Jesus would preach, live, die, and, ultimately save.

"This passage speaks of another who would appear suddenly. It is speaking about Jesus when He comes again at the conclusion of history as we know it. Then He will come as "the Messenger of the covenant." In the first coming, He comes to save; in the second, He comes to judge. Malachi says that He is coming to make good the covenant God made with Israel! The people asked at the end of Malachi 2, "Where is the God of justice?" In Malachi 3:1, God answers their question. He says He is coming to save and then He is coming to judge and uphold the covenant He made with Israel.

Therefore, this is God's answer to the people of Israel: God will send Him first as a Savior because He is gracious and He wants to save. But that doesn't end it all: He is coming again as the messenger of the covenant, that is, to execute justice and judgment on this earth.<sup>18</sup>

God makes and keeps promises. Give thanks to Him for His faithfulness to us and to His people of old!

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<sup>18</sup>Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee



## WEEK 50 GOD HEALS ISRAEL WITH A BRONZE SNAKE

-----Chris Watson

We know by now that the Israelites have the tendency to whine and complain, even after everything God has done for them! This week, we find them complaining yet again. This time though, the Lord punishes them. He then provides a way for them to overcome the punishment. Sometimes this happens in our own lives. We make choices and because of bad choices, we have consequences or punishment, but then God provides a way out if we will listen to Him.

### Day 1

#### Read Numbers 21:1-3

You might remember back in Numbers 14, the Israelites disobeyed God, went their own way in battle, and were heavily defeated. However, today's passage is different. Instead of taking things into their own hands, the first thing they do is pray. When Edom, in the previous chapter, denies them permission to come their way, they find another way to continue the journey. On their way to Atharim a few of the Israelites were captured. They asked God to deliver the enemy into their hands and they destroyed the cities. This time they did it the right way. They sought God.

We have all made decisions on our own and then halfway down the road realized it was the wrong decision and we decide that now is the time to pray. In all truth, the time to pray was long before we made the decision. God often gets blamed for situations we find ourselves in when He wasn't even consulted to begin with. Sometimes we give God a lot of "credit" for things He didn't do, for things we bring on ourselves.

Let us seek God through prayer in all that we do. May we follow His plan with every small and big decision. We can learn a lot by reading Scripture, but we also understand details of His plans through prayer. Before ever making a decision, follow the Holy Spirit's leading through the Word and through prayer. Pray without ceasing and pray about all matters of life. When you are prayed up, you are ready. Seek Him and His will today.

## Day 2

### Read Numbers 21:4-6

Not long after God delivered the Israelites from Arad, they began complaining again. They were upset about the food they were eating so they began to whine. This time God punished them by sending venomous snakes. When they realized what they had done, they went to Moses. (Remember, he was a mediator between them and God.) They told Moses they had sinned. God provided a way out by putting a snake on a pole and, if they looked at the snake, they would live. God provided deliverance.

Notice, however, that the Israelites always seemed to go back to complaining. They complained it would be better if they were back in Egypt, they complained about the food, and they complained about the conditions. Basically, they complained about everything. Even after they had seen God work in numerous ways, they still complained and had difficulty trusting God.

Sound familiar? Does this sound like us as Christians? We have seen God do great things. We have seen Him save us, provide for us, love us, and be faithful, yet we complain. Unfortunately, I have found some of the most complaining people to be Christians, myself included. This should not be! God has given us so much more than we deserve, yet we complain or even keep going back to a sin (such as complaining) that we can't seem to overcome. Ask God today to help you find peace, joy, and contentment in Him. Ask Him to help you overcome a complaining spirit, negative attitude, bitterness, or hatred. Romans 8:37 tells us we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. God has conquered it all; through Him, we are more than conquerors in whatever may come our way.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Numbers 21:7-9 and John 3:9-15

We have seen so many ways that the Old and New Testament work hand in hand. Today, the passage we read in the New Testament is an account with which many may already be familiar. Our reading today stops at verse 15, but we know what verse 16 says.

When the Israelites were out in the wilderness whining and complaining, they faced consequences. They were going to be bitten by snakes and killed. However, if they looked at the snake that Moses had made and put on a pole (following God's instructions), they would live. Verse 7 of Numbers 21 says the people realized they had sinned and they were wrong. If they would look at the snake, they would live, but if they didn't they would die! What was the one condition they had to carry out in order to live? "Look!" Look and live.

John compares the account of Moses and the Israelites to Jesus. Jesus says that just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert so the Son of man (Jesus) must be lifted up, meaning He must die on the cross for our sins. Christ's death had not yet happened, but it was soon to come. Verse 15 of John 3 says that everyone who believes in Him (Jesus) may have eternal life. Just as the Israelites looked at the snake and lived, if we acknowledge our sinfulness, believing Jesus is the only One that can take it away, and trust in Him, then we will be saved. We will be given eternal life! Have you put your faith in Jesus? Did you look and live? If you have, are you following Jesus? Are you seeking to know Him more and more every day? If so, tell the truth to others!

## Day 4

### Read Numbers 21:10-20

Today we see a different attitude in the Israelites than we did in our first devotion this week. Their attitude went from complaining to rejoicing and singing as the Lord had provided them water! God was always their provider; they just didn't acknowledge it very often. The Lord had provided for them and they were thankful.

What are you thankful for? What has the Lord provided for you? How have you seen Him work? Let Him know. Sing praises to His name. Thank Him. Maybe even take some time to write out the ways you have seen the Lord provide for you; this might help remind you of His faithfulness and just how great He is.

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:5 to *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* In other words, in everything in our life we are to rejoice in the Lord! This doesn't necessarily mean we have to like what is going on in our lives or even be happy about it, but, because we know that the Lord cares about and loves His children, we can rejoice in Him and we can trust in Him. It's easy to rejoice in the Lord when things are going well. For example, when the Lord provided water for the Israelites. However, remember just a few days back when there was no water or food and they were complaining? According to Scripture we are to rejoice even then; we are to trust and throw ourselves on God. Job was a picture of this. I think we would all agree that there was nothing to be happy about when Job lost all of his family, his wealth, and even his health. However, at the end of the book, we see that Job realized that God was in control. While he might not understand or be able to make sense of it all, Job knew he could trust God. God was the One who made the stars, the ocean, and the entire world.

Take some time today to thank God for the ways He has provided for you. Take some time to seek and ask God to help you wait on Him through the good and bad times.

## Day 5

### Read Malachi 3:2-3

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! He is everywhere from the beginning of time till now and He will always be. Today we see Him again in this Old Testament passage. The word “purify” is used in verse 3 of this passage. One way to refine gold is to take the gold through extreme heat of temperatures over 1000 degrees. In this process the impurities are done away with and only the gold, itself, remains.

This is exactly what God has done and continues to do for us! He was pierced for our impurities (sin). He did away with them for good! When we place our faith in Him and what He has done, we have the gift of eternal life and a relationship with Him. Nothing can take this away, as we see in Romans. Even after we enter into a relationship with Him, He desires for us to continue to be like Him. While living in a sinful world, we will continue to struggle with the temptation to do things that are not of God. Sometimes God will allow us to go through struggles, difficulties, and hard times, so He can refine us. This is so He can teach us, love on us, and even “burn up”, figuratively speaking, those things in our life that we hold in such high esteem (more than Christ). God wants our hearts to be pure and holy. In fact, we often sing about it in “Refiner’s Fire” written by Brian Doerksen:

Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold and precious silver  
Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold, pure gold  
Refiner’s fire  
My heart’s one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will

Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from within  
And make me holy  
Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from my sin  
Deep within

God has already washed away our impurities so we can know Him and spend eternity with Him. As we continue to live our lives, He wants to constantly refine us to be more and more like Him. How is God refining you right now? It's not always a fun process, but in the end, it is rewarding and much needed. God, refine me!





## WEEK 51 BALAAM'S FEEBLE ATTEMPT TO CURSE ISRAEL

-----Dennis Watson

There are so many occasions recorded in the Bible of enemies seeking to eliminate the people of God. This is not just true of the history recorded in scripture, but it is also true of attempts recorded in history after the Bible. In modern times, we have the attempt by Hitler and the Nazis and more recently by the Iranians to “wipe Israel off the map.” We have thousands of years of recorded history since Israel came into existence and a multitude of enemies seeking to eliminate them. Most of those enemies have been incredibly larger and more powerful in appearance. However, God made a promise and He is faithful. This week we look at a king by the name of Balak who became fearful of the people of Israel and called on a prophet by the name of Balaam to come and curse the people of Israel.

### Day 1

#### Read Numbers 22:1-20

We know a lot about Balaam, but in many ways he still remains a mystery. He was a prophet. He was a Midianite and he was mentioned three times in the New Testament by way of warning.

The King of Moab, Balak, became terrified of the people of Israel. He had seen what they had done to some of the other nations and the people of Moab were “*sick with dread*.” King Balak sent a delegation to see this supposed prophet Balaam to ask him to come and curse Israel. This way, King Balak figured he could defeat Israel. The delegation from King Balak went to Balaam with payment in hand. They told Balaam why they were there. Balaam told them he wanted to sleep on it and hear from God, and he would let them know the next day. God appeared to him during the night and told Balaam not to go with them and not to curse the Israelites because they were blessed. Balaam reported to them the next morning refusing to go with them because, “*The Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you.*” (Verse 13)

The delegation returned, but King Balak was not giving up. He sent another delegation who were *“more numerous and honorable.”* (Verse 15) This time, Balaam refused again, but added a caveat saying, *“Even if Balak gave me a house full of silver and gold I could not go beyond the word of my Lord to do more or less.”* (Verse 18) I believe he was indicating he was holding out for more money. Once again, he told them he would let them know the next day what God said. Balaam was pushing for his own will. What he got was God’s permissive will. What we have here is Balaam’s temptation. Balaam was flirting with his own will and God let him go, but still he could only say what God told him.

How often have I done that? I know what God’s will and way is, but I want to push back and allow myself to be tempted. That is where Balaam was. His true colors would come shining through. Don’t flirt with temptation!

## Day 2

### Read Number 22:21-38

This time God permitted Balaam to go with King Balak's men, but God was not pleased. In fact, God was angry with Balaam for going. God's permissive will allows us to venture where He would prefer us not to go, but God allows us to walk down those roads when we are insistent. Even though serious, there are some very humorous parts of this account.

God was giving Balaam an opportunity to get it together and repent. Balaam saddled his donkey and went with the men, but God sent an angel to stand in the way with a drawn sword. The donkey was smart enough to turn aside, but Balaam refused to pay attention. So, Balaam beat the donkey and got her back on the road. Once again, the angel stood in the way leaving nowhere to go because there was a wall on either side. When the donkey saw the angel, she pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. Once again, Balaam beat his donkey. The donkey journeyed on with Balaam riding, but this time, the angel stood in the way making the way so narrow, there was no place to go. Balaam, in his aggravation and frustration, beat his donkey again. This time the donkey spoke to Balaam. The exchange between Balaam and his donkey went on for a bit. Ultimately Balaam repented and said he would go back home, but God allowed him to continue with the instructions that he could only speak what God said.

So how does this apply? Have you ever pushed so hard to do something you wanted to do and God permitted you to go that way? My experience has been that God also gave me opportunities like He did with Balaam to turn back to His will and way. God still uses donkeys! Pay attention. Don't let the donkey discern God's will while you are not paying attention.

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Numbers 24:11-19

Balaam delivered a total of seven prophecies or oracles, but not once did he give even a hint of a curse on Israel, only blessings. This really angered King Balak. The first three prophecies were blessings. Balaam was faithful to God in that he told King Balak he would only speak what God told him. After the first three prophecies, King Balak told Balaam to leave and go home and neither bless nor curse Israel. But before leaving King Balak, Balaam gave four more prophecies. Here is what the website gotquestions.org says:

“Before he left, Balaam reminded the king that he had said from the very beginning he could only say what God told him to say. Then he gave the king four more prophecies, gratis. In the fourth prophecy, Balaam foretold of the Messiah: “A star will come out of Jacob; / a scepter will rise out of Israel. / He will crush the foreheads of Moab, / the skulls of all the people of Sheth” (verse 17). Balaam’s seven prophecies were seven blessings on God’s people; it was God’s enemies who were cursed.”<sup>19</sup>

Who was anticipating the coming of the Messiah? There are other prophecies in the Old Testament regarding His coming. Daniel prophesied in the east and gave a very clear prophecy that would indicate the time of His coming. It is significant this prophecy of Balaam came out of the east, because it was out of the east that wise men came seeking the one who was born King of the Jews. Where would the wise men have learned about the star? How would they have come to associate it with a king born in Israel?

Every year at Christmas, we have sermons, plays, songs and displays of wise men coming to worship the Christ child. Most likely they made the 800 to 900 mile journey because they knew about the prophecies of Balaam and Daniel, both of whom were in the east when they made their predictions. Daniel even gave an indication of when to expect His arrival. (Daniel 9:24-27).

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Balaam-in-the-Bible.html>

Few were expecting His arrival except Simeon, Anna and these wise men.

I hope you are enjoying connecting the dots. What an amazing thought that even the wise men did some dot connecting to find Jesus!

## Day 4

### Read 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11

We are reminded that Balaam was a prophet used by God to bless Israel and to give others a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah. We saw early on he had a problem with temptation in the area of greed or coveting. The New Testament mentions Balaam three times and not once is it flattering. We will look at two times he was mentioned today and the third tomorrow. The third one was his downfall.

What is "the way of Balaam"? Peter says he was "*The son of Bosor who loved the wages of unrighteousness.*" (Verse 15b) Balaam knew that he should not go and prophesy against Israel, but he loved the price that was being offered to him. He pushed to go and God allowed it, although he could not speak anything except what God said. He was hoping to somehow get a payday from King Balak. "The way of Balaam" is the covetousness of one who does religious work for personal profit. Balaam was after money and was willing to sacrifice his principles for it. Peter was warning the readers not to covet to their detriment. They would be sacrificing their personal and Christian convictions for financial gain. Ultimately we will see this is exactly what Balaam did.

J. Vernon McGee gives a great explanation of the "error of Balaam" found in Jude:11:

"The error of Balaam here in Jude is that he thought God would have to punish Israel for their sins. He did not recognize that there is a morality that is above natural morality. He thought that a righteous God had to curse Israel. He was totally unaware of the morality of the Cross. It is taught in the Old Testament that God can maintain and does enforce His authority, but He can be just and the justifier of a believing sinner. Balaam did not understand that God would forgive the nation Israel when they turned to Him. It is sometimes difficult for someone to understand how a man can be converted. When I worked in a bank, was led to Christ, and wanted to study for the ministry, my fellow workers, most of

whom were church members, could not understand how I could study for the ministry. And they had ample reason to wonder about that, by the way. They couldn't understand that God had forgiven me and that I had a new life now. They just didn't believe that. They didn't believe it because they couldn't understand it. This is the same problem that Balaam had."<sup>20</sup>

God has settled the sin issue. For the Israelites, He did it with the bronze serpent, temporarily. God has gone to great lengths to remove our sin and guilt. We often look at other people and think to ourselves that they are unworthy of God's forgiveness. That is true, but it is true of all of us. He has made us worthy through the work of salvation through Jesus Christ. Do not think anyone is beyond the reach of God's love.

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<sup>20</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.



## Day 5

### Read Numbers 25:1-9 and Numbers 31:16

You really have to hand it to Balaam. He only spoke what God said regarding Israel when King Balak called on him to curse Israel. He blessed rather than cursed, but he found a way to bring about the trouble King Balak sought. In Revelation 2:14, Jesus said He has some things against the church at Pergamos. He said they held the “*doctrine of Balaam.*”

*But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. **Revelation 2:14 (NKJV)***

You read about this in Numbers 25:1-9. The source of the problem is spelled out by Moses in **Numbers 31:16**:

*Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. **Numbers 31:16 (NKJV)***

Balaam did not curse Israel, but he came up with a plan for King Balak to weaken the people. The plan was to infiltrate Israel with ungodly people who practiced idolatry. Balaam told King Balak how to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel: Balaam wasn't able to curse Israel, but he knew how to defile them and seduce them into sin so great that Jehovah would judge them. Balaam suggested to Balak (31:16) that the Moabites (25:1) and Midianites (v. 6) convene a religious feast to honor Baal, and invite the Jews to attend. The feast, of course, would involve idolatry and abominable immorality and would be a flagrant violation of Israel's covenant with the Lord. Moab was related to Israel through Abraham's nephew Lot, and the Midianites were the allies of Moab, so there was no reason why the Jews shouldn't be "neighborly." What Balaam couldn't do by appealing to the

demons, he accomplished by appealing to the flesh and inviting the Jews to "enjoy themselves" at Baal Peor.<sup>21</sup>

Balaam was a wicked prophet. He was not a false prophet. He did hear from God and God did give him some true prophecies to speak. Balaam was not right with God and ultimately his true colors came shining through. Guard your heart lest you too be used of the enemy to put a stumbling block before others.

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<sup>21</sup> Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch.



## WEEK 52 THE NEXT GENERATION: A NEW BEGINNING

-----Dennis Watson

The book of Deuteronomy is a book of transition. The generation that left Egypt some forty years earlier has died off, all except for Joshua, Caleb and Moses. Moses is writing or at least speaking this and we know the book of Deuteronomy closes with his death on Mount Nebo after the Lord allows him to see the land because *"The Lord showed him all the land"* **Deuteronomy 34:1**. The closing chapter of Deuteronomy was most likely written by Joshua. *"And then the Lord buried him."* No one knows where Moses was buried, but we do know he made it into the promised land because we read that Moses and Elijah were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-3; Luke 9:28-31) The book of Deuteronomy is about the transition from the leadership of Moses to that of Joshua. It is about reminding the people of their history and it is about entering the land.

### Day 1

#### Read Deuteronomy 1

One of the great teachings of scripture, I believe, is that you cannot stay where you are and follow God. The life of walking with God is not a stationary one. To follow God is to keep moving. We must move in order to join Him in the next thing He has in store. The Israelites, under Moses leadership, were led out of Egyptian bondage in order to enter the land of promise and live there as the people of God. They were to be a shining light to the rest of the world. The journey they started was one that should have taken only eleven days, but due to their rebellion and disobedience, it took thirty-eight years. An eleven day journey turned into a generation of wandering. Moses told the people it was time to move in. They had dwelt where they were long enough.

Moses reviewed their history in the book of Deuteronomy. God had told them that He had provided the land and given it into their hands. Their part was to go and get it, but they decided to

have Moses send in a team of twelve spies to check out the land and see if they could take it. God had already told them it was theirs! It was not time to investigate, it was time to move in. However, ten of the spies gave a report that the people of the land were taller and greater and the cities were fortified. To the ten, it was an impossible task. That is the main reason for the years of wandering and floundering in the wilderness. None of the generation of people standing on the threshold of the Land of Promise would enter in except Caleb and Joshua. Not even Moses would go into the land. That entire generation would die off in the wilderness wandering.

How many blessings of the Lord are missed or forfeited because of unbelief, disobedience and rebellion? How many have you missed because you would not take the next step to follow God into the next adventure?

So where are you? Is your obedient surrender up to date? Was God trying to hurt or bless the people of Israel? Is there a mission trip in your future? Is the blessing of tithing and giving the next step? I may not even be close, but you get the point. What is your next step?

## Day 2

### Read Deuteronomy 6:1-12

The year I graduated from high school, the Jackson 5 recorded “ABC, 123.” Michael Jackson was 11 years old. It was 1970. The song is about how simple and easy love is. It is as easy as “ABC, 123.” Well that is true to an extent. Many things are simple, but living them out is the challenge.

God gave instructions to Moses to teach the people of the next generations the simple basics of walking with and obeying God. He gave them laws and statutes. He never intended for the specifics of the law to be the focus. They were not just to be learned, but incorporated into daily life.

Back to the ABC’s. I read every day. I never pay much attention to the letters of the alphabet as I read, but each one is necessary for me to be able to read. The same is true when I am writing devotions. I write words using the keyboard of my laptop and that keyboard is made up of letters of the alphabet. I never think of the individual letters but of the words and sentences I am writing. Simple, right? Again, yes and no. What makes it simple is that years ago I was taught the letters of the alphabet. I learned, like most, the ABC song (not the Jackson 5’s). Then, I was taught the sounds of those letters by themselves and then their sounds in conjunction with one another. The sounds became words and the words became sentences and communication. Over time and with much practice, those letters became instrumental for learning and communicating. The basics were learned early and soon became second nature. I never have to review the ABC’s. They are a part of my mental makeup.

Moses was giving instructions for teaching the next generation about the ways and the things of God as they entered the Promised Land. These were to be instrumental for them to be the special people of God. They were to be God’s people to communicate God to the rest of the world for generations to come.

The teaching of the laws and statutes of God were elementary but were to become much more.

Here is how Paul addressed the failure to move beyond the basics:

*"By this time you ought to be teachers yourselves, yet here I find you need someone to sit down with you and go over the basics on God again, starting from square one—baby's milk, when you should have been on solid food long ago!"* **Hebrews 5:12 (MSG)**

Have you been and are you moving on from the basics? Are you helping those of the next generation also move on from the basics?

## Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS

### Read Deuteronomy 34 and Luke 9:28-31

Moses' life can easily be divided into three equal sections. The first forty years were the years in Egypt from the time of his birth until he fled after killing an Egyptian. The next forty years were spent in Midian taking care of the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro. The last forty years were spent leading the people of God out of Egyptian bondage and through the wilderness wanderings. Moses was, like the entirety of the generation except for Joshua and Caleb which left Egypt, not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of their rebellion and disobedience. In God's mercy and grace, He allowed Moses to go to Mount Nebo to the top of Mount Pisgah to see the Promised Land.

*"Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there." Deuteronomy 34:4 (NKJV)*

Then, Moses died and it says that the Lord buried him. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died and he was still strong and had good vision. The Lord had truly blessed him.

It is sad to think that Moses only saw the Promised Land from the top of a mountain. Think again! We have this incredible account in the Gospels about the transfiguration when Moses and Elijah were with Jesus. Warren Wiersbe explains it this way:

However, all was not lost; for Moses did arrive in the Holy Land centuries later when he and Elijah joined Jesus in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-3; Luke 9:28-31). Moses even talked with the Lord Jesus about "His decease [exodus]" that He would accomplish on the cross at Jerusalem. (Moses knew something about an exodus!)<sup>22</sup>

What the law could not do, Jesus did—get Moses into the Promised Land. Talk about amazing grace! Talk about the mighty power of God. Jesus is the Way for Moses too!

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<sup>22</sup> Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – Pentateuch



## Day 4

### Read Deuteronomy 16:1-8

When the people who had been in bondage left Egypt, forty years earlier, they left with special instructions. In these verses, they are told that the event is to be remembered with a special event and feast. The event and feast is known as Passover. On the night of their departure the Israelites were instructed to make special preparations so that they could leave Egypt in great haste. A special lamb was to be killed and cooked and its blood smeared on the door frame of all of the houses of the people of Israel. The blood was to be a sign to the angel of death to pass over this house because all inside were people of Israel who believed, and obeyed God and were ready to depart Egypt to move to the Promised Land. They were to eat a special Passover meal with each part of the meal having significant meaning.

Remember Deuteronomy is a review of their history and the law, a review to prepare the new and surviving Israelite generation as they entered to take possession of the Promised Land. As they were about to enter the land Moses instructs the next generation to observe the Passover celebration annually. The Passover celebration was to be a new beginning platform. This platform had three planks which were to remind and inspire and become instructional.

Plank one, we will call independence day. They were to remember that they had been in bondage in Egypt and the Passover Celebration was their vehicle of independence.

Plank two, we will call victory day. They were to be reminded in the Passover Celebration of the victory God gave them as He miraculously delivered them from their enemy.

Plank three was to be a reminder of the new beginning not only out of Egypt but into the Land of Promise.

Greatest of all is we now know the Passover Celebration and event anticipated a lamb that would be slain for our independence from sin. It represented our victory over the grave and the new beginning we have been given of new life in Christ.

Jesus was our Passover Lamb. In fact, Jesus was killed on Passover. It was the night He shared the Last Supper with His followers and, for believers, that event became our Passover observance. It is a celebration of deliverance from sin. It is our celebration of victory over sin, death, and the grave. It is our new beginning because each day we are being made new by the work of Jesus Christ through His resurrection.

## Day 5

### Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20

In **John 14:6b (NKJV)** Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life.”* Jesus is all of these. The only way to have the way, truth and life is to have Jesus. In today’s passage, God calls the people to a decision. They have the choice of life or death and blessings or cursing. The people were about to enter the Land of Promise. The blessings and benefits of the land were dependent upon their choice. God’s gift of salvation and deliverance are unconditional. God delivered the people out of Egypt and had given them the land. The blessings and enjoyment of the land were determined by their obedience to go take the land and live in ongoing fellowship with God. God placed a choice before them. The choice is life and good, or death and evil. The choice is phrased differently, but it is the same—choose life that comes from God or choose a death type of existence out of fellowship with God.

Remember, these are God’s people. If they followed faithfully, they would live in the land and enjoy its blessings and benefits. If not, they would be scattered, but the land would always be theirs. When they were scattered He would bring them back.

The greatest blessing of all is God’s gift of salvation. We cannot lose that. However, we can miss out on the richness and benefits of fellowship with Him. God makes the relationship possible and He maintains it. We are responsible to maintain fellowship with Him.

The next generation was about to enter the land! They needed to know that two significant themes of following the Lord God are love and obedience. The two go together. I like the way J. Vernon McGee puts it:

I repeat it again: Love and obedience is the great theme of Deuteronomy. If this was so important for the children of Israel, how important it is for you and me in this day of grace when we have

been given so much more light? Since we have been given more, our responsibility is greater. One of the things I pray for more devoutly than anything else is that I may be kept close to Him today. Oh, friends, we need to be kept close to the Lord Jesus Christ. How important it is! <sup>23</sup>

However, remember He keeps us through salvation by the blood of Christ. We stay close by fellowship through obedience.

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<sup>23</sup> Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

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